University of Alberta

INCLUSION WITHIN THE MIDDLE SCHOOL YEARS

by

Nancy A. Davis ©

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Education

in

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Dedication

This work is dedicated to my maternal Grandmother,
Joyce Gould;
a teacher from the days of the one room school house;
a mother of five;
grandmother of eighteen;
great-grandmother of twenty-two;
who taught us all the value of life-long learning,
the importance of acceptance and tolerance,
and whose wisdom continues to inspire those
fortunate enough to spend time with her.

Abstract

This qualitative study's primary purpose was to portray a clear picture of the current understanding of inclusive philosophy, policy and practice. A reputational sample of ten administrators and seven teachers participated in this study. Data were collected through qualitative interviews, observations and follow-up correspondence. Qualitative analysis was used to analyze the data.

The findings revealed four defining characteristics. As well, recognition and acceptance of the continuum of values, philosophies and practices, as well as the barriers to inclusion, were identified as being critical to inclusive education. Collaborative leadership and the development of collaborative relationships within educational decision-making, problem solving and communication were crucial. Inclusion called for the merger of special and regular education which resulted in role changes for all involved stakeholders. Educators were required to utilize a variety of responsive and differentiated curricular and instructional approaches. Finally, the involvement of parents and guardians as partners in education was a necessity.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

The notion of attending neighbourhood schools with peers, learning the core curriculum mandated by Alberta's Department of Learning, participating in all aspects of school life and having relationships with people of one's own choosing is often a commonly accepted, yet taken for granted, viewpoint of students in Alberta. For students with disabilities however, this is frequently an unattainable reality. "Many families [still] face seemingly insurmountable barriers in their attempts to obtain an appropriate education for their sons and daughters with disabilities" (Grenot-Scheyer, Fisher, & Staub, 2001, p. 1). Even though we live in a time when inclusive placements are the "presumptive right of all students," we must acknowledge the disappointing reality that inclusive placements are not yet a reality for all students (Yell, Rogers, & Rogers, 1998, p. 73).

Over the past two decades, the inclusion movement has attempted to push the education system beyond the dual track system of regular and special education to provide a continuum of services that would ensure all students a placement in the least restrictive environment (LRE). In 1993, the Alberta Government released Policy 1.6.1 regarding the educational placement of students with special needs. This policy states that "educating students with special needs in regular classrooms in neighbourhood or local schools shall be the first placement option considered by school boards, in consultation with students, parents/guardians and school staff."

At the beginning of the 21st century, "educational reform initiatives regarding inclusive education (sometimes referred to as *next-level inclusion* or *second-generation inclusion*)" require that educators "think through" past reform efforts (Grenot-Scheyer et al., 2001, p. 3). Many of the past initiatives focus on what inclusion should look like, how inclusion should be practiced, to whom services should be delivered and in what setting. This prescriptive approach has not proven to be effective. The reality is that most educators face "real-life circumstances, limited budgets, inadequate training and limited social support that challenge their ability to achieve the kinds of milestones and maps needed for quality inclusive schooling" (p. 17).

Contemporary inclusion is about a new vision of what is best for all students. The current emphasis encourages educators to think beyond the parallel system of special education and regular education and the continuum of services. It challenges educators to think about how supports can be delivered to all students. It asks that educators see their inclusive programs as being "student-centered, democratic, reflective communities [where] diversity is viewed as a strength and opportunity" (Grenot-Scheyer et al., 2001, p. 5).

Ferguson (1995) describes this second-generation inclusion.

> Inclusion isn't about eliminating the continuum of placements or even just about eliminating some locations on the continuum, though that will be one result. Nor is it about discontinuing the services that used to be attached to the various points on the continuum. Instead a more systemic inclusion – one that merges the reform and restructuring efforts of general education with special education – will disassociate the delivery of supports from places and make the full continuum of supports available to the full range of students. Every child should have the opportunity to learn in lots of different places. A more systemic inclusion will replace old practices (which presumed a relationship between ability, service and place of delivery) with new kinds of practice (in which groups of teachers work together to provide learning supports for all students. (p. 285)

In this view, inclusion is neither a new special education program nor a new category of special education services. It is not a place on a continuum. It does not exist separately from the rest of the school community. "It is a philosophy that embraces fostering a sense of full membership of students with disabilities in school-wide communities that extend from preschool through the university" (Landers & Weaver, 1997, p. 7).

Although inclusion indicators do exist in many of Alberta's schools – for example, "students with disabilities are being educated in neighbourhood schools, with age-appropriate peers, support services, qualified instructors and in a curriculum meaningful to the student"), there is tremendous variability across the province in the interpretations and practices of inclusion (Landers & Weaver, 1997, p. 7).

Identification of the Problem

At the heart of the inclusion debate is the issue of fairness. Ideally, inclusive education respects the rights of all children, realizes each child's full potential and promotes respect for individual differences. Student diversity is seen as a source of enrichment and challenge. Fox and Ysseldyke (1997) and Stanovich, Jordan and Perot (1998) claim inclusion:

1. increases peer acceptance of children with special needs.
2. nurtures a positive sense of belonging and self-esteem in children,
3. improves, or at least does not inhibit, academic progress of students,
4. enhances the social development of all students, particularly with regard to tolerance and acceptance of diversity.

Grenot-Scheyer et al. (2001), in their review of the literature, found that much of the research claimed "there are teams of exceptional leaders and super-teachers capable of guaranteeing recommended inclusive practice at all times of the day and in every corner of every child's life" (p. xvii). The practical reality is, while there may be exceptional educators and super-teachers, there are also many real-life barriers which prevent this ideal.

In practice, the inclusive movement has placed new demands on school district administration, school principals, regular and special education teachers and support personnel. Decisions regarding policy interpretation and implementation and student placement differ from one school district to the next (Barnett & Monda-Amaya, 1998; Fox & Ysseldyke, 1997; Guetzloe, 1999; Johnson, 1999; Landers & Weaver, 1997; and Larrivee, Semmel, & Gerber, 1997). As well, there is considerable variability in the terminology used to define inclusion and to describe inclusive practice in schools.

According to the literature on inclusion (Aiello & Bullock, 1999; Guetzloe, 1999; Speidel, 1989; and Walther-Thomas, Korinek, McLauglin, & William, 2000) there are a number of critical factors which must be considered in order to provide effective inclusive settings:

1. low pupil-teacher ratio classrooms,
2. resources and supports for differentiation of curriculum,
3. support assistance for students with emotional, behavioural or academic disabilities,

4. in-service training,
5. adequate teacher preparation and support,
6. cooperative planning and preparation time,
7. a continuum of placement options.

Grenot-Scheyer et al. (2001) also suggest an overall systemic change in philosophy and practice is required. Consequently, administrators and teachers are being challenged to adequately provide equitable, inclusive learning opportunities for all students, including those with disabilities.

In addition, while the literature suggests a majority of teachers feel they have the skills and knowledge to handle the diverse challenges of special needs students, the Comprehensive Review of Special Needs Services in the Calgary Board of Education (1997) discovered it was a "slim majority of 54.3%" (p. 7). One could speculate that these results may not be representative of educators in rural or remote settings where the availability of supports, resources and services is significantly reduced. Many administrators and teachers feel not only unprepared, but pressured to accommodate special needs students and are asked to do so with few additional resources or supports (Barnett & Monda-Amaya, 1998; Bennett, Deluca & Bruns, 1997; Fox & Ysseldyke, 1997; Larrivee et al.,1998).

Furthermore, there appears to be an assumption that all educators are capable of providing inclusive programs. This perspective contributes to workplace stress and dissatisfaction. Asking exceptional teachers, who have demonstrated both the motivation and competence, to accommodate additional students with disabilities, is equally unfair (Crossman, 1996).

Many teachers have observed that while some students do benefit from inclusive programs, others do not. Students with severe emotional needs or behaviour disorders often negatively impact the learning environment for all students and cause considerable stress for teachers (Bennett et al., 1997; Guetzloe, 1999; and Stanovich et al., 1998). As well, students with severe or profound disabilities who have many physical care issues are often difficult to include because of their program needs (e.g., physiotherapy, occupational therapy and toileting issues), physical space requirements (e.g., wheelchairs, walkers or standing frames), time required for personal support and assistance as well as their distracting behaviours.

Yet inclusive placements do insure "the least restrictive environment." As well, there is a growing body of research which describes "numerous positive outcomes of inclusive education for all students and their families, teachers and members of the learning community" (Grenot-Scheyer et al., 2001, p. 6). Inclusion is an attitude; the "unqualified acceptance and the fostering of student growth at any level," on the part of all adults involved in a student's education (Landers & Weaver, 1997, p. 7).

Second generation inclusionists have raised many questions (Capper, Frattura, & Keyes, 2000; Grenot-Scheyer et al., 2001; and Landers & Weaver, 1997). Does successful inclusion only occur because of the efforts of super-teachers and administrators, sufficient funding and resources? Is inclusion simply a theoretical construct or democratic ideal that is too impractical to implement? Even the inclusionists themselves dissolve into debates about whether a child should be fully-included or included only for a portion of the day. Second generation inclusionists would recommend we:

> Not be encouraged to return to segregated models of schooling, because the challenges of quality inclusive schooling have not yet been achieved for many children or because many professionals do not yet appear to be ready to pursue those challenges or able to put them into practice even when they are psychologically ready to do so. (Grenot-Scheyer et al., 2001, p. xvii)

This is not to suggest that we should meet the needs of all students in a full-time regular education program in the name of inclusion. Nor does it mean that full-time inclusion is the only option on the inclusive continuum. However, we do know that inclusion is working in some schools and for some students and their families. We need to find ways to replicate these successes in all schools in order to ethically achieve fairness for all students. By examining and reflecting on existing theory and practice possibly we can learn from our mistakes and take steps toward a more inclusive education system.

Beliefs and Biases

Educators have been expected to embrace and exemplify the inclusive philosophy even though they may not feel ready to make the required changes or may be philosophically opposed to inclusive education. I have observed educators being challenged to "think beyond" inclusion and to examine their practice in order to learn how best to meet the needs of all students. I have also seen educators being challenged by their personal limitations, limited funding, a lack of supports and resources, limited planning and preparation time and overly large classes.

After ten years of teaching in a variety of special education and regular education settings and at a variety of levels, I have discovered that many of my beliefs about inclusion have influenced my own teaching practice and that these beliefs have resulted in a number of biases. Although I have attempted to isolate my beliefs and biases and have taken steps to minimize their effect on my observations and analysis of the data, I am conscious of the fact that they have become an integral part of this study. Therefore, I will present my beliefs and biases so that the reader may better understand my viewpoint.

1. I believe inclusive education is, first and foremost, a value. Those that believe in the value of inclusive education believe that all students, regardless of their physical or academic potential, are valuable members of their learning community and of society. Therefore, all students will benefit from opportunities to learn and to contribute together within their school and community.
2. I believe inclusion requires change in how educators think about meeting student needs. Ethically, all students are entitled to the "least restrictive environment" and a curriculum that is appropriate, stimulating and tailored to meet individual needs. The key is to value and respect individual differences among learners and to differentiate instruction so that learners can demonstrate their own intelligence.

3. I believe all individuals have a continuum of needs that change over time, whether they be physical, social, intellectual, emotional or spiritual. Therefore, it is possible that all individuals may be challenged in various ways and at different times.
4. I agree with Capper et al. (2000) who claim, "The language of opposites usually associated with the terminology in education, such as typical/atypical, disability/non-disability, at-risk/not at-risk, gifted/not gifted" are not always appropriate or helpful. We need to move beyond categories and labels and focus on each individual's continuum of strengths and needs.
5. I believe all students, regardless of race, gender, culture, age, talent, temperament or experience, benefit from learning together. Learning and belonging happen together. There is strength in diversity.
6. I believe that placement in a regular classroom does not necessarily guarantee that a child is being included, while exclusion from the regular classroom almost always guarantees exclusion.
7. I believe that as the diversity of classrooms increase, there is a greater need for collaboration among regular program and special education teachers and all other education and support professionals. In the words of Grenot-Scheyer et al. (2001), "Inclusive models of education require the development of a collaborative ethic and shared ownership of all students" (p. 7).
8. Finally, although I believe inclusive education is the "ideal," I recognize that there are many contemporary, social and political pressures which prevent this ideal.

Research Questions

It has been my experience that elementary school teachers have been most successful at making inclusion a reality and that as students move through the middle grades to senior high school, inclusion becomes less probable. What is it that enables some educators to continue inclusion through the middle years? Given the same provincial regulations and guidelines, why are some school divisions, schools and individual educators more apt to support inclusive programs? Despite many of the well known barriers and challenges in education, Alberta's educators have been working toward inclusive placements for students and some schools have been finding success.

Perceptions of the term inclusion translate into models of program and service delivery at the school division, school and classroom levels. As a result, it is through the perceptions of these educators that one can explore the current understanding of inclusion in Alberta for those in the middle school years. Therefore, the main research question asked in this study was: How do educators perceive inclusion in Alberta middle schools?

Subsidiary Research Questions

To reveal the participants' understanding of this phenomenon the following three subsidiary questions were used to guide the interview (see the Interview Schedule, Appendix C):

1. How is inclusive education defined?
2. How is inclusion practiced?
3. How is success in inclusive programs defined?

Definition of Terms

Clear definitions are useful for understanding the rationale for inclusion and all of the critical components of inclusive education. For the purpose of this research, six operational definitions were used.

1. Although there is no one agreed upon or legal definition of inclusion, in 1995 The National Center on Educational Restructuring and Inclusion (NCERI) in the United States developed the following comprehensive definition:

> Providing to all students, including those with significant disabilities, equitable opportunities to receive effective educational services, with the needed supplementary aids and support services, in age-appropriate classrooms in their neighborhood schools, in order to prepare students for productive lives as full members of society. (cited in Grenot-Scheyer et al., 2001, p. 2)

For the purpose of this research, the terms inclusion and inclusive education will be used synonymously.

2. An Individualized Program Plan (IPP) is defined as “a concise plan of action designed to address the student’s special needs and is based on diagnostic information which provides the basis for intervention strategies. All students with special needs, from severely disabled to the gifted and talented, require an IPP” (Alberta Education Policy, Regulations and Forms Manual, p. 2). The term IPP will be used synonymously with the American IEP or Individualized Education Plan.

3. Students with disabilities or students with special needs, are those students described in section 29 (1) of the School Act, as those in need of special education programs because of their “behavioural, communicational, intellectual, learning or physical characteristics; or students who may require specialized health care services; or students who are gifted and talented; or any combination of these characteristics” (Alberta Education Policy, Regulations and Forms Manual, p. 2).

4. According to Yell et al. (1998) the least restrictive environment is an educational setting which most closely resembles the regular classroom. “The less an educational setting resembles the regular classroom, the more restrictive it is considered under the law” (p. 73). The term most-enabling environment will be used synonymously with the least restrictive environment throughout this study.

5. Regular classrooms are “those classrooms which are not segregated for specific instructional programming such as life skills instruction, remediation or academic challenge programming for gifted students (Crossman, 1996, p. 4). The term “general classrooms” originated in the United States and in some quotations will be synonymous to the term “regular classrooms.”

6. Taken from the American IDEA (1990), section 1401(16)(A), special education is defined as “specially designed instruction, at no cost to parents or guardians, to meet the unique needs of a child with a disability, including – instruction conducted in the classroom, in the home, in hospitals and institutions and in other settings” (Crockett & Kauffman, 1999, p. 75).

Contribution to Theory and Practice

There has been a great deal of research on inclusive education. There are "how to" manuals, books on the inclusion and school reform link, literature focusing on the merits and pitfalls of inclusion, debates regarding the philosophy and practical implications of inclusion and so on. Almost all of this research concludes by saying that we must continue to explore, expand and increase this body of knowledge in order to build quality inclusive schools and communities.

Ainscow (1995) claims, "Research activity among teachers seems to have increased to the point that it has become virtually a requirement, signifying a reflective teacher and learner" (cited in Clough, 1998, p. 119). "It is the ability to think and judge independently, fostered through research and personal development, that provides the foundations for movement toward inclusive education" (p. 138). Therefore, educators must not be afraid to look closely at current inclusive models, reflect on successes and failures and make efforts to improve inclusive practice.

In Alberta, there are schools that are successfully including students with disabilities; there are others that are not. All of these schools are operating under the same fiscal situation, provincial policy and educational directive. This research has the potential to reveal what has enabled some schools to include all students while others struggle to find their way. Thus, this study may be of interest to teachers, principals, central office administrators, policy developers and other education professionals.

Furthermore, this study has the potential to provide rich descriptions of the ups and downs of the inclusive journey in Alberta schools. By examining the stories and experiences of educators – some successful and some not so successful – educators and teachers of educators may be able to see their own experience reflected in the lives of others and be able to draw upon this knowledge to improve inclusive practice.

This research is also a source of many unanswered questions. As the participants shared their experiences and perceptions, it became very clear that there was not "one best method" for establishing inclusive schools nor was the list of requisite factors indisputable. Many "what if" questions resulted from the findings. Consequently, in a very broad sense, this research could be meaningful for educational researchers and theorists.

Finally, this study should be of interest to parents and guardians as they strive to obtain inclusive placements for their sons and daughters with disabilities. The nature of inclusion is such that educators are faced with some of the most challenging, yet significant, decisions regarding human rights, in order to provide all students a quality education and assist these students and their families to be part of a learning community. Greater awareness of the context and climate in which educators make these critical decisions may also provide greater understanding of the challenges and barriers educators face. The public needs to be aware of the exceptional human effort put forth by educators to provide quality inclusive programs for all students.

Organization of the Thesis

Chapter 1 introduced the research topic and provided background information to the study. Within this overview, the research problem was identified, terms were defined and my beliefs and biases were presented. The general and subsidiary research questions were stated and the contributions to theory and practice were discussed.

Chapter 2 presents a review of the literature pertaining to inclusion. Although limited in scope, the review successfully provided a general synopsis of the literature pertaining to (a) the history of inclusion and the basis for inclusive practice, (b) philosophical underpinnings and definitions of inclusion, (c) implications for inclusive practice and (d) the future of inclusive education.

Chapter 3 provides an in-depth description of the research design and methodology used in this study. It begins with a justification for selecting and using qualitative research methods. This is followed by a recounting of the pilot study. There is a description of the data collection process as well as a discussion on the participants, their schools and school divisions and the observations of the classrooms. The data analysis procedures are defined.

The procedures for trustworthiness, as well as the effects of researcher bias were presented. Finally, the limitations, delimitations and assumptions are revealed.

Chapter 4 describes the grounded theory and phenomenological approaches used to analyze the data. The grounded theory approach reveals five main categories as well as a variety of related sub-categories and supporting details. The resulting list of categorical details was composed by using the participants' own words. The phenomenological approach went beyond the list of categorical details to recreate the full picture of inclusion in the middle school years. Five sub-categories are identified with the data on the definitions of inclusion; five sub-categories result from the data on inclusion in practice and; three categories are revealed by the data on successful inclusion. The chapter concludes with four success stories that accentuate the possibilities in inclusive education.

Chapter 5 discusses the research findings of this study as they related to the findings in the literature. The common characteristics and general underpinnings defining inclusion are presented. Hall's Stages of Concern are applied to the continuum of values, philosophies and practices in order to illustrate movement toward an inclusive model. The aspect of collaborative relationships based on common goals, interdependence and parity, an interactive exchange of resources, collaborative decision-making, problem solving and communicating are shown to be critical to inclusive education. The findings reveal a variety of barriers to inclusion, the impact of effective collaborative leadership, the need to re-envision curricular and instructional approaches. Finally, the study highlights the need for role changes and parent-professional partnerships.

Chapter 6 provides an overview of the study and is divided into four parts. The first section summarizes the purpose, method and significance of the study. The second section describes my assessment of the findings in the form of conclusions. Section three provides recommendations for future practice and further research. The chapter concludes with a personal reflection on my experience in carrying out this work.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

This chapter provides a review of the literature pertaining to inclusion: the process of educating students with special needs in regular classrooms in neighbourhood or local schools with same-age peers without special needs on a part or full time basis. By way of introduction, this review begins with a sampling of recent media pieces which illustrate current viewpoints regarding inclusive education. This is followed by a brief history of special education history and law which illuminates the basis for inclusion. A discussion on the philosophical underpinnings and the resulting definitions of inclusion are provided.

The section entitled *Inclusion in Practice* begins with a discussion about the debate surrounding inclusive practice. Opposing perspectives regarding placement and programming of students is provided. The list of required critical elements is identified. A discussion on the implications for teachers and principals (i.e., the importance of attitudes and teaching/leadership practice) is presented. Finally, the fiscal impact and the impact on regular and special needs students is addressed.

The section called The *Future of Inclusive Education* begins with a listing of the variables that distinguish effective from ineffective inclusive programs. This is followed by a summary of the critical success factors and current causes for concern. An argument about the need to educate society in order for there to be any meaningful change is presented. It concludes with recommendations for further research and the need to re-envision educational reform.

Introduction

> *Parents Want More Inclusive Schools:* Parents of special needs children are calling on the public school board to improve inclusive education services within the district. "Inclusion in Edmonton Public isn't really there, though it says it is in all the literature," said Harrington, a member of the Edmonton Regional Coalition for Inclusive Education. "You as a district do not direct your principals or your resources to including children with special needs, unless forced to do so by parents." (The Edmonton Journal, May 11, 2001, p. 5)

> *Inclusive Education: Summer Institute, July 03 - 13, 2001:* The University of Calgary in partnership with Alberta Association for Community Living (AACL), offers three courses as part of the Community Rehabilitation and Disability Studies Summer Institute. The University of Alberta in partnership with AACL will also offer one of the three courses at the U of A campus. These courses will be of interest to teachers, administrators, parents and others who are committed to educating students with developmental disabilities in the regular classroom. (The ATA News, May 8, 2001, p. 14)
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> *The New Classroom:* Coming soon to a school near you: inclusion, an educational practice that calls for kids with disabilities to spend most or all of their school days in regular classrooms. While inclusion is becoming more common, most parents know very little about how it works. Who gets classified as disabled? Do kids with emotional disturbances as well as those with Down's Syndrome get the same kind of special education? And perhaps the most compelling question: Can the needs of such a diverse student population – the girl with cerebral palsy, the boy with ADHD, the C student who struggles with math – all be met in one classroom?" (Parents, September 1999, p. 185)
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> *Thinking of Inclusion for All Special Needs Students? Better Think Again:* Full inclusion, in which the regular education teacher must learn a monumental number of additional skills in order to deal with both special and regular education students, may be state-of-the art education for the Nineties – the 1890s, that is – according to Messrs, Smelter, Rasch and Yudewitz. (Phi Delta Kappan, September 1994, p. 35)

Inclusion is among the hottest topics in education today (Ferguson & Ferguson, 1998; Guetzloe, 1999; Messrs et al., 1994; and Yell, 1998). It is virtually impossible to peruse a newspaper, parenting magazine or educational journal without finding at least one article written about the subject. Joy Rogers (1993) has described the past decade as "The Inclusion Revolution." What is interesting about this trend is that inclusion is not a new idea (Guetzloe, 1999; Winzer, 1998; and Yell et al., 1998). Throughout the past four decades, parents and educators have been proposing that students with disabilities be given the opportunity to attend regular school programs with peers who are not disabled (Ferguson & Ferguson, 1998; Guetzloe, 1999; and Yell, 1998). School districts have been offering inclusive programs for students with disabilities since the early 1900s (Winzer, 1998; Yell, 1998; and Yell et al., 1998).

Special Education History and Law

"The history of Special Education law is a chronicle of the efforts of parents and advocacy groups in the courts and legislatures of this country" (Yell et al., 1998, p. 219). In 1948, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, considered by many to be the United Nations' most important achievement, recognized that "all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and right" (www.inclusion.org, 2001, p. 7). This document listed many civil, political, economic and cultural rights, including the right to an education.

During the 1950s and 1960s, the Civil Rights Movement "sought changes in society that would allow ... equality of opportunity and led to litigation and changes in legislation" (Yell et al., 1998, p. 220). The precedents established in *Brown v. Board of Education, 1954,* led to tremendous change in educational policy and to approaches for dealing with students with disabilities. The U.S. Supreme Court unanimously declared "in the field of public education the doctrine of 'separate but equal' has no place – separate educational facilities are inherently unequal" (www.inclusion.org, 2001, p. 7). This decision signalled the beginning of legislation which stated that "students with disabilities [had] a presumptive right to be educated in integrated settings with students who are not disabled" (Yell, 1998, p. 73).

By 1975, the United States passed the Education for All Handicapped Children Act (Public Law 94 – 142) which provided additional impetus for educational reform across the nation (Barnett & Monda-Amaya, 1998, p. 181). The concept of the "least restrictive environment (LRE)" arose out of this act and was redefined in the American Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) in 1990 (Johnson & Bauer, 1992; Landers & Weaver, 1997; Smith & Dowdy, 1998; and Villa & Thousand, 1995). The IDEA required public schools to provide free and appropriate public education to all children, regardless of disabilities. It also provided due process rights for all children with disabilities and their parents, ensuring free, fair and unbiased assessment, placement and programming in the form of individual education plans (IEPs), as well as parental involvement in all decision making (Yell, 1998; www.inclusion.org, 2001).

In 1994, representatives from 92 countries and 25 international organizations met in Spain to form the "World Conference on Special Needs Education. " The "bold and dynamic statement" that resulted, known as the UNESCO Salamanca Statement (1994), "called for inclusion to be – quite simply – the norm" (CSIE, 1995, p. 8):

> Regular schools with this inclusive orientation are the most effective means of combating discriminatory attitudes, creating welcoming communities, building on an inclusive society and achieving education for all; moreover, they provide an effective education to the majority of children and improve the efficiency and ultimately the cost-effectiveness of the entire education system. (cited in Clough, 1998, p. 5)

A short time later, in the United States, the IDEA was amended once again when P.L. 105 -17 was passed into law. Congress stated that "the IDEA had been extremely successful in improving students' access to public schools," and the critical issue in 1997 was to improve the performance and educational achievement of students with disabilities in both the special and regular education curriculum (The Senate Report , 1997, cited in Yell et al., 1998). According to Crockett and Kauffman (1998), the amended IDEA (1997) "supports a movement away from full inclusion back to the roots of special education – toward individualized learning" (p. 74).

In Canada, the political situation is such that "the right of every child to education is not constitutionally entrenched" (Winzer, in Willis, 2000, p. 27). Willis (2000) claims the primary reason for this is that Canada lacks any type of cohesive federal perspective on education (p. 26). Without a federal mandate, provincial governments are left to develop their own legislation, regulations, policies and procedures that ensure all children free and appropriate public education (Alberta Education, 1997; Willis, 2000).

Under the terms of the School Act (1988), Alberta Education "holds school boards responsible for providing special education programs for students identified as having special needs which includes students with educational disabilities and for gifted and talented students" (p. 1). Therefore, school authorities are required to provide special education programs based on Individualized Program Plans (IPPs) designed to meet the education needs of identified exceptional students (Policy 1.6.2). In 1993, Alberta Education put into place policy regarding the appropriate placement for students with disabilities, Policy 1.6.1. Educational Placement of Students with Special Needs (p. GD. 12). This policy states that "Educating students with special needs in regular classrooms in neighbourhood or local schools shall be the first placement option considered by school boards, in consultation with students, parents/guardians and school staff."

In 1997, the Calgary Board of Education (CBE) Comprehensive Review of Special Needs Services revealed that most public school districts provided two systems of education; the regular education system that focused on group needs and teaching based on a general curriculum and the special education system that focused on individual needs (p. 4). This review highlighted a number of significant trends related to inclusive education in Alberta. These major trends included:

1. merging special education and general education into a unified system,
2. emphasizing accountability for resources, utilization and student outcomes,
3. developing school, family and community partnerships,
4. working in collaborative teams at the school level,
5. dealing with a growing number of students with serious behavioural issues,
6. strengthening staff development to enable teachers to modify programs and develop alternate teaching strategies,
7. downsizing central student support services. (p. 5)

This brief history of special education law provides a basis for inclusive education. According to Yell (1998) one should be able to ascertain a "clear understanding of inclusion through detailed legal analysis and by revisiting significant court cases" (p. 70). Although this may be true, the general public and many of today's educators continue to engage in the ongoing debate about "the rhetoric around inclusion" (Ferguson & Ferguson, 1998, p. 303).

Interpretations of Inclusion

Children with special needs have been served through *special schools, segregation, mainstreaming, integration, reverse-mainstreaming, inclusion, inclusive schooling, full-*

inclusion and schools for all (Capper et al., 2000; Ferguson & Ferguson, 1998; Guetzloe, 1999; Landers & Weaver, 1997; Wade, 2000; Yell, 1998; and Yell et al., 1998). According to Ferguson and Ferguson (1998) "The debates generated by these various proposals sometimes have been cordial, sometimes acrimonious, but always revealing of the issues, assumptions and politics that interpret the practices of our field" (p. 302). Much of the literature suggests that these various buzz words have meant different things at different times in different school districts, provinces, states or countries, fuelling the debate about what the term, inclusion, really means.

In Canada and in the United States, there is no one agreed upon, legal definition of inclusion. Landers and Weaver (1997) claim, "Because inclusion is part of change, [it] ... can only be understood as an emerging practice" (p. 3). Kauffman called the term inclusion "virtually meaningless" since the placement of some students with disabilities in the regular classroom has been an educational practice for decades (cited in Guetzloe, 1999, p. 93).

Crockett and Kauffman (1999), and Guetzloe (1999) believe inclusion has become a colloquial term that has led to broken promises for reform.

> As a political concept, inclusion captures the moral high ground by signifying something more desirable than the symbolically bereft notion of exclusion. As a legal concept, however, inclusion falls short of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). As an educational concept, inclusion fails to describe concretely the instructional supports and strategies that facilitate the relationship between a student's specific learning needs and the classroom elements required to address those needs.
> (Crockett & Kauffman, 1998, p. 28)

They propose that inclusive education embraces the inclusion of literally all students with disabilities in the regular classroom and the abolishment of the continuum of services provided for in the IDEA. Crockett and Kauffman (1998) suggest some define inclusion as "regular classroom placement for all students with disabilities but on a part-time basis for some; still, others propose the inclusion of students for whom it is appropriate" (pp. 28 - 29).

Fuchs and Fuchs (1998) claim inclusionists only pursue polices and practices they consider possible and realistic. Inclusionists claim the critical distinction between themselves and full-inclusionists is that they are "skeptical of the imaginary, theoretical or quixotic" (p. 309). They believe that each placement on the continuum of services should offer "specialized, differentiated, individualized and intensive instruction, all of which [need to be] continuously evaluated for effectiveness" (p. 310).

Second generation inclusionists seek to frame the debate in terms of "specially designed, technically different, but necessary instructional technologies" within the context of the broader school restructuring movement and consider inclusion to be "generative rather than additive" (Grenot-Scheyer et al., 2001, p. 3). These next-level inclusionists think of inclusion in the context of the educational change debate and the rethinking of the least restrictive environment mandated by the IDEA. Inclusion is discussed as:

> 1. an attitude of acceptance,
> 2. educational programming that meets the needs of all student,
> 3. a way of thinking about the continuum of educational needs and appropriate supports needed to educate a diverse student population,
> 4. as a process, not a placement. (Landers & Weaver, 1998, p. 3)

For the purpose of this research, the definition provided by The National Center on Educational Restructuring and Inclusion (1995) was used. The (NCERI) provides a detailed definition of inclusion:

> Providing to all students, including those with significant disabilities, equitable opportunities to receive effective educational services, with the needed supplementary aids and support services, in age-appropriate classrooms in their neighborhood schools, in order to prepare students for productive lives as full members of society. (cited in Grenot-Scheyer et al., 2001, p. 2)

Much of the current research on inclusion suggests the above definition of inclusion has become commonly understood and accepted (Capper et al., 2000; Elliott & McKenney, 1998; Ferguson & Ferguson, 1998; Fuchs & Fuchs, 1998; Grenot-Scheyer et al., 2001; Wade, 2000; Yell, 1998; and Yell et al., 1998).

Philosophy of Inclusion

As one can see, the current tensions surrounding inclusion appear to stem as much from competing visions on how best to educate all students as they do from the interpretations or misinterpretations of the term inclusion (Capper et al., 2000; Ferguson &

Ferguson, 1998; Fuchs & Fuchs, 1998; Grenot-Scheyer et al., 2001; and Wade, 2000). Perhaps inclusion should be defined as a philosophical position, attitude and value statement rather than a point on the continuum of educational options. According to Guetzloe (1999), "The philosophy of inclusion is an individual and collective commitment among all education professionals, families and communities toward 'ownership' of all students with disabilities, those who are at risk of being so identified and those without disabilities" (p. 93).

It is from this viewpoint that inclusion is seen as "a new vision of what is best for all students" (Grenot-Scheyer et al., 2001, p. 2). Only here does inclusion require an "attitude of unqualified acceptance and the fostering of student growth at any level" (Landers & Weaver, 1997, p. 7), "a collaborative model" (Capper et al., 2000, p. 5), as well as changes in teaching philosophy, practice and curriculum (Ferguson & Ferguson, 1998; and Grenot-Scheyer et al., 2001).

Ferguson and Ferguson (1998) argue that the inclusive debate stems from the constructive tension and the potential for reflective reform that results from opposing philosophical perspectives. They suggest, "such polarization can serve to highlight the disjunction between what is being said and what is being done" (p. 303).

Inclusion in Practice

The most vocal advocacy for inclusion has come from parents and educators of children with more severe disabilities and yet, almost "60 percent of these children still spend most of their school day in self-contained classrooms" (Ferguson & Ferguson, 1998, p. 303). Students with milder disabilities are now the ones who spend more time in regular education classrooms. Ironically, "it is researchers and advocates for these students with 'milder' disabilities who have been among the most active opponents to inclusion" (Ferguson & Ferguson, 1998, p. 303).

In the midst of this inclusive revolution, regular education has also been examining its own practices and results (Ferguson & Ferguson, 1998). Guetzloe (1999) observed that with respect to this self-evaluation, there is both good news and bad news:

> The good news is that there are "pockets of excellence" in some school districts in which students with and without disabilities live and learn together in their neighborhood schools. Special education and related services necessary for the students to achieve success are made available in the regular classroom.
>
> The bad news is that many school districts across the continent simply do not provide the elements of inclusion. Horror stories abound – of overcrowded classes; untrained and unskilled teachers; students in need of more restrictive placements; students who are often excluded from school; students who make no progress in either their individualized education programs (IEPs) or the regular curriculum; and students, who in spite of the mandates of the public law and their own IEPs, receive no special education or related services at all. (p. 93)

Many researchers assert that professional educators ... are being challenged to reflect and "think through" the concept of inclusion as it relates to educating all students (Fuchs & Fuchs, 1998; Grenot-Scheyer et al., 2001; Guetzloe, 1999; Landers & Weaver, 1997).

Placement and Programming

Educators continue to debate the "most appropriate placement and program" for students with disabilities (Smith & Dowdy, 1998). Smith and Dowdy argue, "Decisions regarding the educational programs for ... young children with disabilities must be based on individual needs – not clinical labels, philosophical issues or any other one factor" (p. 319). Advocates for inclusion believe, "To the maximum extent possible ... children with disabilities should learn and play alongside their non-disabled peers" (Fuchs & Fuchs, 1998, p. 309).

Inclusionists also place the benefits of inclusive programs at the centre of their argument for inclusive placements and programs. Hunt and her colleagues (1992) conducted a study where the achievements of students with severe disabilities in regular and segregated settings were compared. Their findings indicated that the "students placed in integrated settings had not only higher quality IEP objectives but also a higher likelihood of meeting their IEP objectives" (cited in Grenot-Scheyer et al., 2001, p. 12). Students in inclusive settings also had "higher levels of engagement, affective demeanor, social interaction and involvement in integrated activities" (p. 12). As well, included students had greater access to an expanded curriculum.

Fox and Ysseldyke (1997) present the opposing side of this debate. They claim several organizations of general and special educators and of advocates for students with disabilities such as The Commission on the Education of the Deaf, The Council for Exceptional Children, The Learning Disabilities Association and The National Education Association have issued policy statements supporting a strong separate special education system (p. 82). These organizations believe that the needs of their students are best served in distinct and often separate programs. Fox and Ysseldyke (1997) also suggest while inclusive practice may be effective during the primary years, the practice of inclusion becomes even more complicated at the secondary level for two reasons:

> 1. the discrepancy between the minimum levels of academic skills required for success in a general classroom and those possessed by students with disabilities is greater at the secondary than at the elementary level.
> 2. integration would require significant structural changes in the secondary school environment. It would require secondary teachers to shift from "teacher-centered instruction" with its greater emphasis on subject content to "student-centered instruction" that focuses more on student needs. (p. 82)

Studies that have addressed content acquisition for students with disabilities have produced mixed results. Grenot-Scheyer et al. (2001) identify one large scale study conducted by Wang and Birch (1984) where significant gains were demonstrated for all students. They also identified a number of smaller studies (Affleck, Madge, Adams, & Lowenbraun, 1988; O'Connor & Jenkins, 1996; and Zigmond and Baker, 1990) where "gains were made in some curricular areas but not in others, for some students but not for others and in classrooms of some teachers but not others" (p.12). Analysis of these studies reveals that most instruction in regular classrooms is presented through large-group instruction and differentiation of instruction is limited. Pugach (1995) suggested that the limitations of the regular classroom "are symptomatic of a failure of the imagination with respect to new expectations that have yet to be identified for second generation inclusive classrooms" (cited in Grenot-Scheyer et al., 2001, p. 12).

Critical Elements

In developing effective programs for students with disabilities, numerous suggestions and listings of critical elements appear in the literature (Aiello & Bullock, 1999, p. 100). Speidel (1989) identified ten different factors that she found were critical to inclusive practice:

1. adequacy of teacher preparation,
2. class size,
3. number of special needs students included per class,
4. amount of time spent in the regular classroom,
5. acceptance of special needs children by regular peers,
6. preparation of special needs and regular program students,
7. personnel involved in decision making,
8. importance of IPPs,
9. provision for support personnel,
10. in-service training. (pp. 75 – 76)

Since then, many others have identified similar lists of critical elements for developing responsible inclusive programs (Aiello & Bullock, 1999; Guetzloe, 1999; and Walther-Thomas, Korinek, McLaughlin, & William, 2000).

While the idea of a formula for successful inclusion sounds enticing, Beninghof (1996) warns "there is no one size fits all formula for inclusion." She recommends:

> The reality is that the methods and training found successful in one situation may not lend themselves to the next situation. Factors related to the nature of students with disabilities, the skill and background of staff members and the uniqueness of a school's culture all call for an individualized approach. (p. 12)

Capper et al. (2000) believe that lists of critical elements are band-aid solutions for a larger systemic wound. They suggest that school districts move beyond their "programs as an isolated island" approach and examine their overall system of meeting student needs (p. 5). These authors recommend "service overlap" where educators are forced to "unravel the qualifiers" around each program (e.g., the referral system, evaluation system, eligibility criteria, service parameters, exit criteria and special and general education model) and "move together to develop a framework of services for all students" (p. 6). Their research challenges the traditional assumptions, values and beliefs held by many stakeholders (Aiello & Bullock, 1999; Guetzloe, 1999).

Effect of School Personnel

Many researchers (Barnett & Monda-Amaya, 1998; Bennett et al., 1997; and Heflin & Bullock, 1999) have found that in addition to the lists of critical elements, what often makes the difference between success and failure of inclusive programs are the attitudes, skills and abilities of school personnel. Studies have been conducted to gain insight into educators' perceptions regarding inclusion. One theme that emerged from a study done by Heflin and Bullock (1999) is that teachers perceive a "top-down mandate" where teachers are told by administrators, "who are keenly aware of financial constraints, public relations, legislation and litigation, that certain students with disabilities will be educated in general classrooms" (p. 104). The teachers in this study claim, "They have no voice when it comes to including students in their classrooms" (Long, cited in Heflin & Bullock, 1999, p. 104).

Bennett et al. (1997) studied much of the existing literature on teacher attitudes and resources between 1958 and 1995 and found that while "approximately two thirds of the ... teachers surveyed supported the concept of mainstreaming/inclusion, only one fourth to one third of these teachers reported that they had sufficient training or material/personnel resources to actually implement inclusion successfully" (p. 116). They also discovered that while "teachers ... reported significantly less positive attitudes toward the concept of inclusion than parents, [it was] teacher attitudes [that] accounted for a significant proportion of variance in reported success of experience with inclusion" (p. 127).

In general, studies of principals' attitudes have revealed mixed findings. Barnett and Monda-Amaya (1998) conducted a literature review on this topic and discovered as principals were called upon to provide leadership and training and support to teachers in inclusive settings, their personal level of comfort and confidence determined their level of anxiety and either a negative or positive orientation toward inclusive education (p. 183).

Thus, these authors found a positive correlation between principals' levels of comfort and confidence and their willingness to implement inclusive practices.

Bennett et al. (1997) discovered similar results with teachers and suggest that general attitudes toward the concept of inclusion and level of confidence with respect to personal skills and ability are strongly related to their ability to successfully include students with disabilities. They conclude that while "positive attitudes and confidence may facilitate positive experiences with inclusion, the positive experiences with inclusion may also further enhance positive attitudes and confidence" (p. 124). Furthermore, their results indicate "teachers who were educated many years ago may have less positive attitudes about inclusion" (p. 127).

Although many factors influence the implementation of effective inclusive education (Kochan & West, 1996), "Regular teachers are left with the primary responsibility of providing instruction in classrooms that are characterized by extreme student diversity" (Friend, Bursuck, & Hutchinson, 1998; cited in Johnson, 1999, p. 73). Consequently, many conclude the cornerstone of effective inclusive education is effective teacher practice (Beninghof, 1996; Johnson, 1999; and Rogers, 1993).

Rogers (1993) claims, "Effective inclusion is characterized by its virtual invisibility" (p. 174). She argues, "The best teachers in inclusive classrooms are simply the best teachers" (p. 175). Expert teachers are highly aware of the dynamics in their classrooms; have extensive "craft" knowledge; are versatile, resourceful and comfortable with a variety of methodologies which they interchange when necessary; they value and enjoy all students and believe in inclusive philosophy; all of which are required of the teacher in an inclusive classroom (Beninghof, 1997; Crossman, 1996; Elliot & McKenney, 1998; Fuchs & Fuchs, 1998; and Rogers, 1993).

This "expert' requirement is also demanded of administrators in inclusive schools. Barnett and Monda-Amaya (1998) identified four key roles for principals in facilitating inclusive practices:

1. providing support for teachers as they learn and grow,
2. working to establish caring relationships with students and faculty,
3. developing a schooled discipline program that reflects insight into students and their problems,
4. setting the tone of support and caring in the school community while providing resources for students, staff and parents. (p. 181)

They concluded, "The principal is the school's primary instructional leader and is therefore, a major player in the change process" (p. 181).

According to Barnett and Monda-Amaya (1998), Beninghof (1996), Fox and Ysseldyke (1997), Johnson (1999) and Rogers (1993), administrators must provide responsible, active and appropriate leadership in order to foster a "sense of ownership" of all students and create a community where collaboration, cooperation and communication are key elements. In addition, administrators have been required to actively promote the social acceptance of disabled students within schools by developing a tolerant school culture, providing in-service training to all staff, including support staff and by creating communities and networks for student support within classrooms and within the school community (Barnett & Monda-Amaya, 1998; Beninghof, 1996; Fox & Ysseldyke, 1997; Korinek et al., 1999; and Rogers, 1993).

Fiscal Impact

"In these times of fiscal restraint education is challenged to meet the needs of all students" (Calgary Board of Education, 1998, p. 3). In order to provide smaller classes and a proportional assignment of students with disabilities to regular classes; to rethink the distribution of educational resources and support personnel; to provide support in terms of in-service training, time for planning and collaboration with specialists; to change policy and re-evaluate programs, school districts will inevitably face additional expenses (Barnett & Monda-Amaya, 1998; Fox & Ysseldyke, 1997; Guetzloe, 1999; Johnson, 1999; Larrivee et al., 1997; and Messrs et al., 1994).

Others suggest inclusion should "ultimately improve the cost-effectiveness of the entire education system" (Clough, 1998, p. 5). Capper et al., (2000) discovered that separate programs "cost 130% more than general education" since disabled students often require "separate space, separate materials and infrastructure, a separate teacher and an administrator not only to manage the program but also to spend time and money on organizing the program" (p. 7).

Student Impact

Some interesting insights are presented in the literature regarding the impact of inclusion on students with disabilities and those without disabilities. Fox and Ysseldyke (1997) studied the perceptions of teachers to assess the impact of inclusion on students. They found that special education teachers were more negative than positive about the inclusion process, the "social and affective impacts on the included students and about its effects on the other students." Regular program teachers "had seen positive effects of inclusion on the social development of included and the other students." Neither group could accurately assess the "academic or affective impacts of inclusion" (p. 92). Korinek et al. (1999) argue there is evidence showing that an improved classroom community has a "significant effect on student attitudes, interest, productivity, engagement and academic achievement" (p. 3).

Stanovich et al. (1998) suggest the social and affective goals of inclusion are not being met In addition, they claim that peer acceptance of special needs students is not automatically promoted by the practice of inclusion (p. 124). Guetzloe (1999) also found "little empirical information to support the efficacy of inclusion ... in terms of the actual gains made in basic skills ... social competence ... or content areas" (p. 93).

Tichenor, Heins and Piechura-Couture (1998) studied the perceptions of parents and reported increases in the children's self-esteem, social skills and academic achievement. In addition, parents commented that inclusive classrooms were "unique, ... afforded diverse opportunities for learning, [and] individual needs were more easily accommodated within the classroom" (p. 475). Bennett et al. (1997) also studied parent perceptions. They echoed these findings and added, "the availability of appropriate role models for behavior and friendship with peers" was an important outcome (p. 127). Fox and Ysseldyke (1997) found, "While a few parents had perceived a positive effect on their children's social development ... the majority of parents saw no effects at all" (p. 92).

Interestingly, regular program students have been among the most enthusiastic supporters of inclusion. They claim to have observed positive social effects on both themselves and on included students (Fox & Ysseldyke, 1997, p. 93). Stanovich et al. (1998) also conducted research with students. They discovered that the academic self-concept and measure of social integration for students (i.e., students with disabilities, English as a second language, the educationally at risk and those not categorized) in an inclusive setting was highest for those students who were not categorized (p. 123).

The Future of Inclusion

The debate regarding the philosophy and practical implications of inclusion continues to be fuelled by opposing perspectives representing ideological differences between professionals who support the traditional programs and services approach and those who support inclusive schools. Some researchers (Fuchs & Fuchs, 1998; Guetzloe, 1999; Messrs et al., 1994; and Stanovich et al., 1998) argue "Little, if anything, is known empirically and that what is known addresses a narrow group of students, is subjective and is constrained by ideology." Others report that a significant body of data can and does inform inclusive school practices (Capper et al., 2000; Fox & Ysseldyke, 1997; Johnson, 1999; Smith & Dowdy, 1998; and Wade 2000).

Research has shown us that inclusive classes and schools do exist in various places and in varying degrees across the nation (Lipsky & Gartner, 1998). For more than a decade "educational researchers have sought to identify variables that distinguish effective from ineffective schools" (Larrivee et al., 1997, p. 27). Schorr (1989), in her work *Within Our Reach*, identified seven attributes of highly effective programs. She claims successful programs:

1. are comprehensive, flexible, responsive and persevering,
2. see children in the context of their families,
3. deal with families as parts of neighborhoods and communities,

4. have a long-term, preventative orientation and clear mission and they continue to evolve over time,
5. are well managed by competent, committed individuals with clearly identifiable skills,
6. employ staff who are trained and supported to provide high quality, responsive services. (cited in Grenot-Scheyer et al., 2001, p. 9).

Lipsky and Gartner (1998) suggest we have discovered how to provide effective programs and increasingly whole school approaches for inclusion, yet have failed to do so on a district wide basis. Many others (Capper et al., 2000; Crockett & Kauffman, 1998; Grenot-Scheyer et al., 2001; Lipsky & Gartner, 1998; Yell, 1998; and Yell et al., 1998) observe additional failures. Special and regular education reforms continue to develop on parallel tracks. The new vision of inclusion calls for a merger of the dual system. Second generation inclusionists also propose a shift from a continuum of educational placements to a continuum of educational services (Grenot-Scheyer et al., 2001; Landers & Weaver, 1997; and Wade, 2000).

The Calgary Board of Education's (1997) review of the literature on inclusion resulted in a list of the recommendations which include:

1. strong leadership at all levels,
2. strong family and community partnerships,
3. changes in school and classroom organization and structure,
4. changes in curriculum and instructional methods,
5. training and staff development,
6. allocation of sufficient resources. (p. 11)

Grenot-Scheyer et al. (2001) add, "Most critical to the practices of inclusive schools ... is the existence of a collaborative culture and the use of collaborative structures and supports" (p. 11). These include top-down administration that also nurtures bottom-up initiatives, co-teaching opportunities, regularly scheduled planning times, collaborative skills training for all staff and students, transition planning, parent and family participation and community networking.

Although inclusive models of education have been available for decades, researchers recently have suggested there is cause for concern regarding the sustainability of inclusive education as it has been typically structured. "In light of contemporary social and political pressures, competing financial needs that affect schools, increased professional demands on teachers and other educators and the growing complexity of learners in diverse, urban schools, renewal and change clearly must be coordinated, comprehensive and efficient" (Grenot-Scheyer et al., p. 5). Even the promising national reforms, such as "Slavin's Success for All, Levin's Accelerated Schools, Sizer's Coalition of Essential Schools, Comer's School Development and Wang's Community for Learning" (Lipsky & Gartner, 1998) have shown "simply improving parts of schools or implementing one or two elements of reform is not enough; schooling needs to be comprehensively redesigned, many changes must be made simultaneously and made to fit together" (Grenot-Scheyer et al., 2001, pp. 9 – 10).

Above all else, the future of inclusive education is dependent upon procedures to teach society about inclusion. Grenot-Scheyer et al. (2001) recommend, "As we share and compare stories, we must identify and articulate the essential characteristics of inclusive educational policy ... with the knowledge that each incarnation of inclusive schooling has been and will continue to be unique" (pp. 175 – 176). They discuss the need to make the "rationale for inclusion explicit and clarify its basis in both moral beliefs and empirical evidence compiled to date" (p. 176). As well, the authors recommend that all stakeholders (i.e., educators, students, parents, community leaders, neighbours and the public at large) agree on the valued outcomes of inclusive education so that analysis and evaluation of inclusion can be conducted from an informed perspective (Guetzloe, 1999; and Johnson, 1999). They urge all stakeholders to collaborate in order to move toward a unified system of education.

Finally, the future of inclusion depends upon the persistence of educational researchers and professionals who attempt to further educational knowledge through continued research and analysis of existing practice. Researchers compel others to conduct further research into the following areas:

1. Curricular and instructional approaches that facilitate inclusion (Beninghof, 1996; Elliott & McKenney, 1998; Wade, 2000).

2. Frameworks for change (Aiello & Bullock, 1999; Capper et al., 2000; Fox & Ysseldyke, 1997).
3. Cultural and systemic factors that affect collaboration (Wade, 2000).
4. Empirical research on the efficacy of inclusion (Bennett et al., 1997; Grenot-Scheyer et al., 2001; Guetzloe, 1999; Larrivee et al., 1997) especially as it relates to:
    - a deeper understanding about learning, exceptionality and equity for students (Crocket & Kauffman, 1998),
    - students with (EBD) emotional/behavioural disorders (Heflin & Bullock, 1999).
5. Longitudinal studies on the process of inclusion (Landers & Weaver, 1997; York-Barr, Schultz, Doyle, Kronberg & Crossett, 1996).
6. Policy implications (Fuchs & Fuchs, 1998; Grenot-Scheyer et al., 2001; Johnson, 1999; Yell, 1998).
7. Teacher and leadership training and preparation (Barnett & Monda-Amaya, 1998; Johns, 1998; Rogers, 1993; Stanovich et al., 1998).
8. Establishing inclusive communities – parent involvement (Bennett et al., 1997; Grenot-Scheyer et al., 2001; Korinek et al., 1999; Tichenor et al., 1997).
9. Educational programming (Smith & Dowdy, 1998).
10. Change in the roles and responsibilities of school personnel (Conroy, Clark, Gable & Fox, 1999).

Conclusion

"It is necessary to understand that inclusive education is not tinkering with the traditional, established system, but rather an overhaul of that system" (Landers & Weaver, 1997, p. 27). Educators committed to inclusive education are committed to rethinking the purpose of education and creating a new system that embraces all learners and holds all stakeholders accountable for the education of our youth. The new system may have elements of the old, but the new system is based upon a new philosophy.

This type of school renewal has definite implications for educational policy and practice. Regardless of whether these reforms are termed second generation inclusion, next level inclusion, restructuring or reinvention, their primary purpose should be to develop schools that have the capacity to accept, educate and care about each member of the school community. Research has proven that inclusive schools are possible. In these schools, education professionals agree on the values of inclusive education, develop an inclusive philosophy and collaborate to build an inclusive culture and structure. They integrate resources and merge the expertise of special and regular program educators.

Interestingly, not all inclusive schools adopt the same policies or practices that enable them to provide successful inclusive programs. The literature clearly indicates "that meaningful change in the fabric of schools must come from within schools rather than as a response to external pressures" (Grenot-Scheyer et al., 2001, p. 4). Successful reform must be created, implemented, evaluated and owned by those who benefit directly from it. Each inclusive school is a unique manifestation of the values and inclusive philosophy, the collaborative culture and structure created by the committed, caring community of educators, parents and students.

Although the most recent literature suggests there is much to celebrate, researchers also realistically acknowledge the practical struggles educators face on their day to day journey with inclusive education. The literature suggests we have generally accepted inclusive philosophy as being commonplace in schools yet, provide a variety of traditional and exclusionary practices. This reflects the variety of perspectives held by education professionals. These perspectives are based on one's values, one's experience and one's view of the world. As one's experience changes, so too does one's perspective and with this, comes change in one's practice.

Inclusionists are optimistic that case studies, calls for continued research and lived experience will positively influence educators and result in an improved inclusive tomorrow for children, teachers, families, schools and communities. Nevertheless inclusion, like any change, is not accomplished quickly and it is not accomplished without opposition or struggle. Inclusive education is a developmental process that requires commitment, thoughtfulness, self reflection and analysis, experience and conflict.

Ferguson and Ferguson (1998) maintain, the tensions resulting from the variety of ideologies educators develop as they wrestle with inclusive process:

> Need not be seen as hopeless contradictions, but rather can be approached as constructive antagonisms that lead to a process of enduring reform. The future of inclusion may not be found in our choice or the choice of others. Instead it may be found in a reflective process of recognizing the true sources of tension among all those advocating for education restructuring and living with the somewhat unpredictable outcomes. (p. 303)

Someone once said, "If we always do what we've always done, we'll always get what we've always got." The following poem is a reminder that tomorrow holds many possibilities; an opportunity to affirm our beliefs, put our values to the test and refine our "best practice."

Is There Another Way?
By Ambrose Brazelton

I wonder, is there another way
To travel from home to work each day?
Another route, an innovation
Assuring arrival at the destination?

A back road round, a short cut through
A street free of traffic, a broad avenue?
Or are we mandated to heed and obey
Traditions and habits,
Is there just one way?

A Biblical hero, Moses, by name,
Thru critical thinking achieved great fame.
Facing sea and mountains and army quite mad,
No bridges, no boats – he used what he had.

And then there was David, a shepherd boy,
Courageous and brave with a slingshot toy.
The Philistines shouted with much chagrin,
"There's old Goliath, stoned again!"

A modern champion refused to comply
With traditional styles of soaring high
A unique invention to reach the top
Is currently called, "The Fosbury Flop."

Tasks are solved in many ways
Like the basket catch of Willie Mays.
Technical breakthroughs and bells start to ring
When one dares be different, "to do his or her own thing."

Each child is unique – no two are the same
Observably different in physical frame
And backgrounds, potentials, interests and needs.
Then why must we lock-step development speeds?

Why must we travel the same boring route,
With structured child-failure day in and day out?
To solve teaching problems, we have but to say,
"Surely, there must be another way."

Taken from *Inclusive Education, A Process, Not a Placement*, (Watersun Publishing Company Inc. Copyright 1997).

Chapter Summary

The purpose of this chapter was to present an overview of the literature pertaining to inclusion. The review is somewhat limited in scope yet, it successfully provides a general synopsis of the literature pertaining to: (a) the history of inclusion and the basis for inclusive practice, (b) philosophical underpinnings and the resulting definitions of inclusion, (c) implications for inclusive practice and (d) the future of inclusive education.

The purpose of this research study was to explore the perceptions of educators in Alberta middle schools, to determine how they understand and experience inclusion in their small corner of the world, in the year 2001. The findings of this research, as they relate to the findings in the literature, will be presented in Chapter Five. It is my belief that a clear picture of inclusion in Alberta, for those in the middle school years, will be the result.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHOD OF THE STUDY

This chapter provides an in-depth description of the research design and methodology used in this study. It begins with a justification for selecting and using qualitative research methods. This is followed by a recounting of the pilot study. The data collection process is presented along with a description of the participants, their schools and school divisions. Data analysis procedures are defined. Procedures for ensuring trustworthiness are identified along with the methods for overcoming researcher bias. The chapter concludes with the limitations, delimitations and assumptions which were factors in this study.

Research Design

The purpose of this study was to obtain the perceptions of educators regarding inclusion during the middle school years in order to present a vivid image of current inclusive practice. Gall, Borg, and Gall (1996) believe a good depiction provides what is called "thick description ... that is statements that re-create a situation and as much of its context as possible, accompanied by the meanings and intentions inherent in that situation" (p. 549). The rationale for choosing a qualitative, phenomenological approach was to describe, as much as possible, the participants' 'lived experiences.' According to van Manen (1990):

> The point of phenomenological research is to borrow other people's experiences in order to better be able to come to an understanding of the deeper meaning or significance of an aspect of human experience, in the context of the whole of human experience. (p. 62)

The qualitative phenomenological method offered the participants' world as the "direct source of data and the researcher as the key instrument" (Crossman, 1996, p. 64). According to Cohen, Manion, and Morrison (2000), the advantage of the "human instrument" is "her adaptability, responsiveness, knowledge, ability to handle sensitive matters, ability to see the whole picture, ability to clarify and summarize, to explore, to analyse, to examine atypical or idiosyncratic responses" (p. 140). As well, the human instrument uses methods that mesh well with human inquiry (e.g., observations, interviews, documentary analysis and "unobtrusive" methods).

Data Collection

> Qualitative research is multi-method in focus, involving an interpretive, naturalistic approach to its subject matter. This means that qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of or interpret phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them. (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994, p. 2)

For the purpose of this research, a pilot study was conducted, followed by qualitative interviews and classroom observations which were the primary tools used for data collection. I also kept a journal of conversations with participants, thoughts about the research process, as well as reflections and insights about the data collected. These proved to be of value when it came to organizing and analyzing the data.

The qualitative interviews provided the majority of data for this study. Interviews were conducted with seventeen participants, on-site, in their own inclusive settings. As well, I took part in a school division town hall meeting regarding student placement and programming issues. The interviews ranged in length from thirty minutes to two hours. With the exception of the town hall meeting, all interviews were conducted during the school day between January 31 and March 6, 2001. The open-ended design allowed participants to reflect on their practice and share their perceptions and a variety of experiences, all of which contributed to the richness of the data.

The interviews, which were audio taped, usually began informally. I initiated each conversation by asking the participants about their demographics, teaching history and experiences with inclusion. Throughout the conversation, I endeavoured to present the three subsidiary research questions. For the most part, the conversation was allowed to flow as naturally as possible and occasionally, I took a moment to note the participant's tone of voice or body language that seemed particularly meaningful. I was surprised at how difficult it was to focus the dialogue on a discussion about inclusion since each participant followed his or her own line of thinking. I also found that some of the most meaningful insights came after I had formally closed the interview. Following each interview, I made an effort to jot notes about our post-interview conversation, listened to the tape recording and recorded questions and comments for follow-up. During the follow-up conversation, I clarified information, asked questions and allowed the participant an opportunity to comment on the data.

Data were also collected through the process of observation. These observations proved to be beneficial in that they allowed me to view a wide variety of teaching situations and interactions considered to be inclusive. Frequently, the data from the observations improved my understanding of the scenarios participants had made reference to in their interviews. As well, they highlighted the continuum of practice accepted as inclusion.

Pilot Study

A pilot study for this research was conducted as part of the requirement for a course in Educational Policy Studies. I was fortunate to have input from Dr. Jose da Costa who provided continual feedback throughout the pilot development. As well, I benefited from the positive criticism and input provided by a number of colleagues.

Prior to the pilot implementation, I had the opportunity to test and practice the semi-structured interview format with three different education professionals. I discovered in all cases, that by making the interview schedule too detailed I had limited the participants' opportunity to reflect and construct meaning from their experience. Consequently, I reduced my interview schedule to three broad questions.

The pilot study participant was selected because of her reputation and her willingness to participate in the study. I interviewed a Grade 2 teacher named Mary, (in order to protect the confidentiality of the participants in this study, pseudonyms will be used for all participant, school and school division names). She was an experienced teacher, with special education training and a Master's degree in counselling. As well, she had been identified by her peers as being a highly effective inclusive teacher. Although she was not a middle school teacher, she had volunteered herself and her classroom; a fully inclusive classroom of thirty students, ten of whom had been identified as having moderate to severe special needs, and ten who had been identified as having mild special needs. Based on her teaching history and education background, I was confident Mary would be able to provide valuable insights about her experiences with inclusion, as well as provide feedback about my interview schedule and observation notes.

The pilot study itself revealed a number of procedural problems. I conducted the formal interview on February 9, 2000 in a coffee shop where noise and audience were major distractions. As well, many times the participant wished to display samples of student work or motioned toward a desk or object in her "imaginary classroom." I discovered, like Perry (1994) and Crossman (1996), that the exploration of a phenomenon requires close contact with the participants and that "data collection must happen in the participants' worlds" (Perry, p. 42; Crossman, p. 33).

Analysis of the interview transcripts emphasized the need for improved concentration and active listening on my part, in order to better facilitate the dialogue. The participant suggested that verification of the written transcript would have been more accurate had she been able to listen to the audiotape. As well, she recommended the terms "IPP, special education and regular education" as used in the study, be defined and communicated to the participant at the beginning of the interview.

I observed the participant's inclusive classroom for three hours during the morning of February 24, 2000. It was virtually impossible to record the myriad of events that happened moment by moment in the classroom. As a result, I developed a system of shorthand and cues for maintaining attention as well as a method of measuring the significance of events by recording time.

The participant found no major faults with my observation notes. Our follow-up conversations (i.e., on the telephone and via e-mail) revealed she was astounded by the volume of observations and was surprised by the happenings that took place outside of her awareness. At the end, the participant commented on how she found the interview and observation process to be enlightening and of benefit to her own professional growth.

Profile of the School Divisions, Schools and Participants

The target population for this study was the education professionals in Alberta middle schools. Immediately following my pilot study, in the spring of 2000, I mailed letters (Appendix A) to superintendents of four rural school divisions to request permission to conduct research in schools within their jurisdictions. I included a *Summary of the Research Purpose and Procedure for Participants* (Appendix B), a *Letter of Consent* (Appendix C) and the proposed *Interview Schedule* (Appendix D). All four superintendents granted permission by letter and directed me to contact them when I wished to begin research.

I selected these four school divisions primarily because I had made contacts within them. I knew one principal in the first school division I approached. I selected the second rural school division because my parents resided there and childcare was a practical concern. The third school division was my previous employer. Finally, an influential colleague recommended his school division.

In October 2000, I telephoned the four superintendents to discuss the details of my research and asked for their counsel regarding schools known to have:

1. middle school years (students in Grades 5 to 9),
2. students with disabilities included in regular classrooms in their neighbourhood or local schools,
3. effective inclusive programs.

The superintendents indicated they would share the details of my research with principals at their next principals' meeting and asked that I contact them at a later date. In three of the four school divisions, the superintendent had assigned a designate who was to be the contact for all further correspondence.

In November 2000, I made contact with the superintendents or their designates once again. The Superintendent of Bellflower School Division asked me to contact the principals of two schools directly. In Star Flower School Division, the Associate Superintendent recommended four schools he felt met the criteria. The Director of Student Services in Paperflower School Division provided me with the names of four principals whom had indicated a willingness to participate in the study. Finally, the Associate Superintendent of Butterfly Flower School Division granted permission to contact any of his jurisdiction's principals.

Once the schools had been identified, the principal or designate provided me with a list of potential teachers, special educators or coordinators and counsellors that were interested in being a part of the study. What follows is a description of the school divisions, schools and participants that were selected. As well, a profile of the classroom observations that were conducted is presented.

School Divisions

The *Bellflower School Division* was formed January 1, 1995. It was created by amalgamating three former school divisions. Approximately 8,100 students were enrolled in the 25 schools in the system. Quality instruction was delivered by over 460 teachers with the support of approximately 140 secretaries, library clerks and teacher assistants. A full program including second language instruction, gifted programs and special education was provided to the students in Grades 1 to 12.

The Board of Education and its employees were committed to joint decision-making and a collaborative approach to system operation and policy development. Stakeholder groups were actively involved in the operation of the jurisdiction. Schools in the system had school councils. Parents were welcomed and were actively involved in the decision-making process.

Butterfly Flower School Division, in cooperation with the home and community, was committed to providing educational opportunities for all students, challenging them to academic excellence, preparing them to be socially conscious, life-long learners ready to become contributing members of society. The division's style of management involved the parents and community, students and staff in planning, problem-solving and decision-making.

Approximately 4,800 students were served in the division's 28 schools. The schools provided a full range of programs within the regular classroom; where necessary pull-out programs were provided. Seven Hutterite colonies were provided with schools and there was also one Outreach School. At the time of this research, there were 287 teachers and approximately 180 support staff, including the Central Office personnel.

The Board of Education recognized the need to provide programs and services appropriate to the educational requirements of students with special needs. It was their belief that it was essential to provide these programs and services to students in the most enabling environment making the best possible use of available resources.

Paperflower School Division provided services to approximately 49,000 residents. The division was committed to ensuring that all members of the education community participated fully in the education of its students. Parents, staff, students and the community worked together to achieve efficient and effective services. Inherent in their mission was the belief that students, regardless of their academic capabilities, physical welfare or socio-economic background, could experience success in learning and could attain high levels of achievement.

Approximately 511 teachers and 370 support staff provided a full range of programs to the division's 9,700 students. Alternative programming allowed the division to offer students an enhanced program that reflected individual interests. Programming for students with special needs was offered through a full range of options, from full inclusion to partial integration to special needs classes. The division served well over 700 students with behavioural, communication, intellectual, learning and physical disabilities.

Star Flower School Division served just over 17,000 people primarily in suburban communities. Approximately 5,000 students were provided quality educational programs in the division's 15 schools. There were 631 employees including all substitute teachers and bus drivers.

The Board of Trustees supported a system wide approach to school based decision-making which focused on maintaining high standards for teaching and learning. Through policy the school board set the vision, established the parameters of the division operations and held schools accountable for their results.

Programs for all students were provided in the most enabling setting. In some cases, the special education needs of students involved adaptation of regular programs or placement in a special program. As well, there was a commitment to provide special services to support students in both regular and special programs.

Schools

I began contacting the approved school principals in January 2001. I had planned to invite one principal and one teacher, from two schools in each of four school divisions, to participate for a total of 16 participants. All of the principals I contacted were supportive of my research and were willing to involve their schools and staff in my study. A *Profile of the Participating Schools* is featured in Table 1.

In some cases, the principals were of the opinion that it would be beneficial for the assistant principal, special education coordinator or counsellor to be involved since they were primarily responsible for inclusion or the special education services within their school. As well, all of the principals offered to recruit teachers, they believed provided inclusive programs, who would be willing to participate.

Celosia Community School was located in a farming community and provided full academic programming to approximately 600 students from Kindergarten to Grade 12. Of the 600 students, approximately 50 were on IPPs and another ten received modified programming. The school employed nine teaching assistants.

The school had a labyrinth of hallways surrounding a central square, an attractive courtyard and meeting area. Each of the divisions (i.e., elementary, junior and senior high) were housed in distinct wings of the school.

The principal was very willing to involve this school in my study, yet opted not to be a part of the study himself. Instead, he recommended I interview his assistant principal who was responsible for the special education in the building. The staff was warm and friendly and welcomed me into their classrooms. The two teachers, whose classrooms I observed, would have liked to have been participants in this study however, I had already collected a significant amount of data and felt I had to limit the number of participants. Nevertheless, I gained valuable insight from the observations of their classrooms and from the informal conversations with these teachers.

I discovered, in addition to the core program offered in the elementary, junior and senior high, Celosia offered a wide range of option courses. Course offerings were determined by student interest and teacher availability. A learning assistance and resource room program were provided for students with disabilities in the elementary school. As well, there was a special education class for students in Grades 7 and 8.

Table 1. Profile of Participating Schools

School Division	School Name	Grade Levels	School Population	Students on IPPs	Teaching Assistants
Bellflower	Celosia Community School	K – 12	600	50 (8%)	9
Butterfly Flower	Waxvine Secondary School	7 – 12	420	96 (23%)	6
	Johnny Jump-Up High	7 – 12	470	60 (13%)	6
Paperflower	Browallia Community School	K – 9	600	80 (13%)	12
	Dusty Miller Community School	K – 9	300	55 (18%)	8
Star Flower	Lady Slipper School	5 – 9	300	60 (19%)	6
	Candytuft Community School	K – 9	500	58 (12%)	7

Waxvine Secondary School was located in a small town and served just over 420 students in Grades 7 to 12. Approximately 96 students had been identified as having special needs and were on IPPs or modified programming. The school employed six full-time equivalent (F.T.E.) teaching assistants.

Upon entering Waxvine Secondary School, I was impressed by the sense of order, purpose and discipline. All staff and students were involved, working and focused. The school philosophy, "Pursuit of Excellence," was immediately apparent.

I interviewed the principal and special education coordinator together, at the principal's request. This proved to be an interesting experience and provided additional insights into the style of administration in Waxvine Secondary. As I traveled to the special education coordinator's classroom to conduct an observation, I had the opportunity to talk about inclusive issues, one on one. This casual conversation also contributed to the data collected. Finally, I observed a group of students included in the regular Grade 8 social studies classroom. The teacher of this class was not a participant in the study.

Waxvine Secondary provided a variety of programs designed to meet student needs in an environment dedicated to helping students develop their talents and fulfill their academic potential. Their junior high school program followed the standard Alberta curriculum and was designed for students of all ability levels to work together in the same classroom and to benefit from one another's contributions. Students with moderate academic difficulties received modification within the regular program. There was also an learning assistance program (LAP) designed to meet the needs of students who experienced difficulties because of physical or mental handicaps. This program focused on life skills training, academic programming at an appropriate level for each child and work experience. A very important aspect of this program was the integration of students into regular program subjects that allowed for maximum social interaction.

Johnny Jump-Up High School was located in a small town and had a student population of approximately 470 students from Grades 7 to 12. Approximately 60 students had been identified as having special needs and were receiving assistance either in a fully inclusive setting or in a pull-out classroom. The school employed six full-time teaching assistants.

Upon entering this school, their philosophy was immediately evident; a banner with "excellence in academics, athletics and fine arts," was proudly displayed on the open beam in the beautiful, open, glass-walled atrium. A number of alumni, who had gone on to national and world class competitions and performances, were spotlighted providing outstanding role models for current students.

The recent change in administration appeared to have caused considerable tension for staff and this was immediately palpable. The principal, at the time of this study, was relatively new to the school. As a result, the assistant principal took responsibility for my visit. She organized a two day schedule of observations and interviews so that I could gain a complete picture of the programs in Johnny Jump-up High School.

The junior high students were offered a strong academic program as well as an Integrated Occupations Program (IOP). The senior high students were provided with three options: an academic, business or vocational route. All programs were supplemented with options (e.g., an innovative fine arts program, career and technology studies and outdoor education). Corporate partnerships helped the school gain some of the most advanced technology seen in Alberta schools today, enhancing all curricular areas.

A variety of instructional strategies and programming were used to assist students with special needs in the regular program. There was also a special education program which provided instruction to students with more severe disabilities. This program was intended to provide programming at an appropriate level for each child. As well, a cooperative education work experience program was designed to bring course work to life and to allow students to explore and experience the working world.

Browallia Community School was a country school which served an acreage and farming community. The school provided programs for approximately 600 students from

Kindergarten to Grade 9. Of the 600 students, approximately 80 had been identified as needing an IPP or a modified program. Fortunately, the school had 12 teaching assistants to help with the inclusion of special needs students.

The principal took me on a walking tour while he explained the design and instructional focus of the school. Physically, the school was designed to enhance the philosophy of the school; "honesty, caring and cooperation." Students were seen in the hallways and open areas throughout the school. Surprisingly, all of these students were focused and working which provided evidence of the school's philosophy.

Each of the divisions (i.e., primary, elementary and junior high) had an open central area which was used for art, science or drama lessons, individual or group work, computer work and so on. Flexibility and innovative instruction were a focus throughout the elementary and junior high school. Alberta Education's Program of Studies was provided to all students.

Each of the grade levels had approximately 60 students in two classes that were relatively heterogeneous in nature. All special education students were included in the regular classrooms. For mathematics and language arts, students were clustered into three groups of approximately 20 students in order to provide additional one-on-one assistance.

Junior high school core subjects were offered in the morning to provide an academic focus. The Grade 7 students had one teacher for three of their core courses. The Grade 8 students had two core teachers and the Grade 9 students had four core teachers. The principal indicated that this provided for effective transition into junior and then, senior high school. All option courses were offered in the afternoon.

Dusty Miller Community School was a rural school serving 300 students from Kindergarten to Grade 9. Approximately 55 students had been identified as needing an IPP. An additional group of students received a modified junior high program. This school was the epitome of a community school. There was an observable emphasis on the provision of a safe and welcoming learning environment. As well, staff were extremely committed to working together as a team to include students, parents and guests as valuable members in the overall learning community.

The staff focused on providing learners with opportunities, support and resources that resulted in a strong foundation and encouraged excellence in academics, social responsibility and self-esteem. Students were encouraged to work towards becoming motivated and directed learners within their regular core programs and within their school community. At the junior high level, in addition to the regular program of studies, modified programs were made available and students were encouraged to choose programs at their level. As well, there were a number of special projects designed to meet individual student's needs.

Eight teaching assistants provided support to staff and students. The principal indicated that although not all were full-time, these eight individuals made a significant difference because each contributed maximally to the school. The parent community also played an active role in the school. They were given the opportunity to provide input into all aspects of programming and were encouraged to help out by coaching, organizing clubs, assisting with optional programming or providing classroom support.

Lady Slipper School served a population of approximately 300 students from Grades 5 to 9 with 15 teachers. Approximately 60 students were identified as needing an IPP or modified programming, or were part of the district special education program. At the time of this research, six teaching assistants were employed. A recent staffing change had freed up some money to provide an additional assistant for a specific area of need.

Although the school was located in a rural setting, it also served a lower socio-economic suburban community resulting in an unusual blend of students and parents. The principal indicated that a number of challenges resulted from merging the demands and expectations of these two, very distinct groups of students and parents. She noted that the lower socio-economic group had similar characteristics to those of an inner city clientele and as a result, there were special needs associated with these types of students.

In addition, Lady Slipper School was home to the school division's Social Enhancement Program (a program for students with behaviour disorders) as well as a junior high Integrated Occupational Program (IOP), both of which were coordinated by the school division's Special Needs Facilitator. Nevertheless, the primary philosophy in the school division was to serve students with disabilities in the regular program first, before district placements were to be considered.

The principal was very willing to involve, not only herself, but one of her teachers in my study. Both participants readily shared their experiences with inclusion in their school. My contact with the rest of the school staff was limited.

Candytuft School provided programming for approximately 500 students from Kindergarten to Grade 9 and was located in a farming community. About 58 students had been identified as needing an IPP or modified programming. The school had seven teaching assistants who provided support and assistance to students and staff.

The principal was an eager participant and felt this study could provide valuable insights into the current situation. Although he advocated inclusive education, he found he was administrating a school where there were a number of competing ideologies. He sensed the staff struggled with inclusive philosophy and therefore maintained a multi-levelled approach to meeting the needs of students. The principal suggested I interview one of his Grade 6 teachers whom he knew provided an inclusive program.

I was intrigued by the Candytuft School philosophy which stated:

1. Each child is a unique individual with different needs and strengths.
2. Education is a life-long process involving all dimensions of development.
3. There are differences in students' learning styles, skills and abilities.
4. Parents and the school must work together to provide the best possible educational program for their children.

They offered an early intervention program for children between Kindergarten and Grade 9. There was also a Learning Assistance Program (LAP) for children between Grades 1 and 3. An Adaptation program was available for students in Grades 4 to 6. Finally, there was an Advantage program (CAP) for students with disabilities in junior high school.

Participants

At the end of January 2001, I began making contact with individual participants. During preliminary telephone conversations the research purpose, design and methodology were discussed, questions were answered and interviews were arranged. It took just over one month to complete 17 interviews, one group session and ten observations. I placed a cap on the number of participants I accepted to control the volume of data. In the end, the study participants included six principals, two assistant principals, one counsellor, one special education coordinator and seven teachers. As well, observations were conducted in ten classrooms.

Using the selection criterion I had provided, all participants were chosen from the reputational sample prepared by superintendents and principals. From there, I selected participants first willing to participate until I had reached a sufficient number from four different school divisions. As well, I attempted to select participants from rural and suburban school divisions east, west, north and south of Edmonton. Since the intent of this research was to gain a deeper understanding of the phenomenon of inclusion rather than achieve a thorough representation of teachers within the province of Alberta, the selection of participants could also be defined as "purposeful sampling" (Gall, Borg and Gall, 1996, p. 218).

All of the participants I approached were interested in participating in the study. After learning about the research purpose and methodology and the expectations for participation, the participants were asked to sign a consent form (Appendix C). In all cases, the participants willingly made time to speak with me, shared their experiences and stories, took part in follow-up conversations and allowed an observation of their classrooms. A *Profile of the Participants* is presented in Table 2.

There were a number of additional details worth noting:

1. One assistant principal, one counsellor and one teacher also provided information regarding their role as special education coordinator.
2. One participant interviewed primarily as a teacher also defined his role as assistant principal.

3. One interview was conducted jointly with a principal and special education coordinator.
4. One principal was terminated from his position and was excluded from the study.
5. Data were collected from a town hall meeting on the issues of student placement and programming.

What follows is a description of the individual participants:

Table 2. Profile of Participants

School Name	Position or Title	Participant Name	Education or Training	Years Experience	Grade Taught
Celosia Community School	Assistant Principal & Sp. Ed. Coordinator	Betty	B. Ed. Elementary (Sp. Ed.)	10 total & 3 Admin.	Grade 7 IOP
Waxvine Secondary School	Principal	Allan	B. Sc. M. Sc. M. Ed. Admin.	28 total & 18 Admin.	-----
	Sp. Ed. Coordinator & Teacher	Pam	B. A. (Psych) B. Ed. Elem. M.Ed. Sp. Ed.	13 total & 3 Coordinating	Junior & Senior Sp. Ed.
Jump-up High School	Principal	Greg	B. A. B. Ed. Sec. M. Ed. Admin.	14 total & 3 1/2 Admin.	-----
	Assistant Principal & Teacher	Alison	B. Ed. Sec.	29 total & 10 Admin.	Math 30
	Counsellor & Sp. Ed. Coordinator	Janice	B. Science. B. Ed. Elem. M. Ed. Counselling	23 1/2 total & 15 Counselling	-----
	Teacher	Barbara	B. Ed. Elementary	21 total	Gr. 7-9 L. A. & French, IOP
	Teacher & Sp. Ed. Coordinator	Teresa	B. Ed. Elementary	1st year	Junior & Senior Sp. Ed.

Table 2 Continued. Profile of Participants

Browallia Community School	Principal	Brad	B. Phys. Ed. Certificate of Ed., M. Ed. Elementary	28 total & 20 Admin.	-----
	Teacher	Julia	B. Ed. Elementary	1st year	Grade 3 & Grade 6
	Teacher	Kerri	B. Ed. Elementary & Music	13 total	Grade 6 & Music
Dusty Miller Community School	Principal	Marjorie	B. Ed. Elem. M. Ed. in Elemetary Curriculum	30 total, 5 in Central Office & 10 Admin.	-----
	Teacher & Assistant Principal	Andrew	B. A. Psych B. Ed. Elementary	9.5 total & 3 Admin.	ECS/ Gr. 1/2, Sc. 7/8/9
Lady Slipper School	Principal	Miriam	B. A., B. Ed. Elem., M. Ed. Admin.,and Ph. D.	24 total & 13 Admin.	Art 8/9
	Teacher	Candice	B. Ed. Elementary & Music	13 total	Grade 5
Candytuft School	Principal	William	B. Ed. Sec. M. Ed. Sec.	23 total & 17 Admin.	Grade 6
	Teacher	Rick	B. Ed. Elementary	28 total	Grade 6

Betty, the assistant principal and special education coordinator of Celosia Community School, kindly offered her experience and expertise. She had a Bachelor of Education in special education, had 10 years of teaching experience in special education, three years of special education coordination and was in the middle of her first year as assistant principal. Much of what she contributed was based on her experiences within Bellflower School Division in general. Betty indicated that inclusion was a valuable and achievable ideal for some students, but was not appropriate for all students. She maintained there was still a need for pull-out programming and, in some cases, for complete segregation.

Allan had 18 years of administrative experience in 12 schools and was in his second year as principal of Waxvine Secondary School. He had obtained three degrees: a Bachelor's degree in Science (physical education), a Master's degree in Science (exercise physiology) and a Master's degree in Education Administration. Allan spoke about his experiences with special education from the perspectives of a teacher and an administrator. He had been very successful in achieving and maintaining highly effective schools. Allan believed there was strength in heterogeneity and that the first placement for students should always be the regular classroom. He contributed a great deal of insight and information based on his 28 years of teaching experience.

Pam had been involved with special education for 13 ½ years in two schools in Butterfly Flower School Division. She had spent the last three and a half years coordinating the special education program in Waxvine Secondary School. Pam had obtained a Bachelor of Arts in psychology and both a Bachelor and Master's degree in Elementary special education. Pam suggested she supported inclusion, but clarified there were limits to its effectiveness for all students. She indicated severe students benefited more from segregated settings where life skills instruction and the necessary physical or medical interventions could be provided. In her experience, inclusion had been tremendously successful for mild and moderate students however, she cautioned that all decisions to include or segregate students should be made on a case by case basis.

Greg had three and a half years of administration in two schools and was in his first year as principal at Johnny Jump-Up High School. In total, he had 14 years experience teaching special education and in counselling. He had earned a Bachelor of Arts degree, a Bachelor of Education degree in secondary business and a Master's degree in Educational Administration. Unfortunately, Greg's tenure with Butterfly Flower School Division was terminated and he was excluded from this study.

Alison, the assistant principal of Johnny Jump-up High School, was very interested in my research and felt her school had much to offer. She had a Bachelor of Education degree in secondary math and had been the assistant principal of the school for ten years. Over the past 27 years, she had taught primarily math to junior and senior high students. Alison explained that the Johnny Jump-up staff had debated the merits and pitfalls of subject specialization and streaming, clustering teachers to teach families of subjects, providing a pull-out approach for special needs students as well as full inclusion. Although she recognized the pros and cons for each method, she felt strongly they were most successful at meeting student needs when they provided a variety of options from complete segregation to complete inclusion.

Janice, the full-time Counsellor of Johnny Jump-up High School, had a Bachelor of Science degree in biology, a Bachelor of Education degree in special education and a Master's of Education degree in school counselling. She had 23 years of experience teaching regular and special education at a variety of levels and had counselled students from Grades 1 to 12. Janice suggested that the inclusive movement was a product of the human rights movement and sensed that in general, inclusive philosophy was supported by most teachers. She countered this statement with another; "realistically, inclusion is not feasible without a significant financial investment and the resources and supports that money can buy."

Barbara had a Bachelor's degree in Elementary Education yet most of her 23 years of teaching experience had been in junior high school. She indicated she had learned to include students with special needs "on the job." Still, Barbara claimed, she had not found it necessary to alter the delivery of the curriculum to students included in her classroom. Nevertheless, she did point out the list of accommodations she used for students with mild learning difficulties and clarified that a pull-out special education program was provided for students with more severe disabilities.

As a first year teacher, *Teresa* had the very challenging job of providing a pull-out special education program for students in Grades 7 to 12 as well as being responsible for the coordination of all special education within the school. Teresa felt the Bachelor of

Elementary Education degree had done little to prepare her for the demands and expectations of this position. She had taken one course on inclusion throughout her entire program. Teresa was thankful that the school counsellor was available to assist her with the coordination of special education, construction of the IPPs and the supervision of teaching assistants. At the time of this study, Teresa had just begun to formulate her own opinions about inclusion.

Brad had been an administrator for 20 years; 15 years as the principal of Browallia Community School and five years as a vice-principal of another school within the division. For the eight years prior to administration, Brad taught physical education. His first degree was in physical education after which he obtained a certificate in education. Some time later he completed a Master's degree in Elementary Education. For the past 15 years, Brad had been working to create an inclusive school. He had designed the physical layout of the school, selected interested and qualified staff and created an inclusive community, all of which resulted in an effective inclusive program.

Julia had taken a job-share position after completing a Bachelor's of Elementary Education degree. She claimed she had been given the ideal situation and appreciated the opportunity to learn from her colleagues, to benefit from the experiences of collaborative planning and evaluation and to share in the communication with parents. Although Julia had limited teaching experience she was insightful and provided a fresh perspective regarding inclusion. She was accepting of all students and believed, with adequate support, she could prepare for and teach all of the students in her classroom, including those with disabilities.

Kerri, whose degree was in Elementary Education and music, believed she was fortunate to have been able to teach regular elementary and music throughout her thirteen year career. Her personal philosophy and teaching style supported an inclusive model and as a result, she found it easy to include special needs students in her classroom. Kerri believed that the inclusive model in Browallia Community School, although demanding of her time and energy, was tremendously successful for students. She also indicated that considerable support was provided to teachers.

Marjorie had been involved in education for 30 years; 20 years teaching a variety of subjects, five years in central office and ten years as principal of Dusty Miller Community School. Originally, Marjorie completed a Bachelor of Elementary Education degree and some time later completed a Master's of Education degree in curriculum. Marjorie was very supportive of my study. She invited me to attend a town hall meeting on some of the issues surrounding student placement and programming which involved over thirty stakeholders from the local community. Marjorie welcomed me and gave me permission to view any of the classrooms in the school.

Marjorie had created an inclusive learning community that extended well beyond the classroom walls. This philosophy was lived out by all staff in the Dusty Miller Community School . Marjorie recognized the needs of both the students and staff. She claimed that decisions regarding placement and programming should be made on a case by case basis since each person comes to the learning community with their own package of strengths to offer and needs to be met She stated, "We all learn from each other."

Andrew was interviewed primarily as a teacher however, he also contributed information regarding his role as assistant principal and the "technology support" for Dusty Miller Community School. He began teaching nine and a half years ago while still completing his certificate of education. Andrew's first degree was a Bachelor of Arts with a focus on psychology, sociology and history. He mentioned he was planning to return to university to pursue a Master's of Education degree in school counselling.

Of all the participants, Andrew was the most observably passionate about his job. His affinity and love for children shone through every aspect of his work. He expressed this passion in a variety of ways. Essentially, Andrew believed teachers must do whatever they need to do, in order to meet the needs of the children at whatever level the children are at and in whatever setting they are in. As well, Andrew claimed educators must work together, communicate regularly, be adaptable, flexible and creative in order to provide the best possible learning community for all students.

As part of the data collected at Dusty Miller Community School, I attended the *Paperflower School Division town hall meeting*, chaired by the assistant superintendent - Director of Student Services. There were approximately 30 different stakeholders in attendance (e.g., teachers, support staff, parents, community members, as well as one former student). It was valuable to hear the perspectives of such a variety of people.

Miriam, the principal of Lady Slipper School, had the most credentials of all the participants interviewed in this study. She had obtained a Bachelor of Arts degree, a Bachelor of Education degree in secondary English, a Master of Education degree in Education Administration and was completing her Doctorate in Educational Policy Studies at the time of this research. Miriam had 24 years of experience in education, the past 13 of which were in administration. She had a great deal of knowledge and wisdom to share. As well, she believed strongly in the philosophy of inclusion and discussed many of the obstacles and barriers that she perceived made inclusion more a theoretical ideal than a practical reality.

Candice was one of Lady Slipper's two Grade 5 teachers. She had been teaching elementary school for 13 years and had earned a Bachelor of Elementary Education degree. Although she had no formal training in special education, Candice appeared relatively comfortable teaching special needs students and had experienced considerable success. Candice had observed that her efforts and success were "rewarded" by the additional placement of special needs students in her classroom. Furthermore, she indicated that in order to obtain appropriate teaching assistant support, she had to badger the administration for more than half a year.

William had been involved in the administration of schools for 17 years, after having taught for six years. At the time of this study, William was taking his Master's degree in Secondary Education. Although his first degree was in secondary math and physical education, he started out by teaching adapted physical education at the Alberta School for the Deaf.

William indicated there were a handful of teachers in his school that supported inclusion. The others maintained that a dual-track approach was more suitable and so at the time of this research, the Candytuft staff were very divided. William felt challenged by this dynamic and thus, provided a variety of options from full segregation to full inclusion, in order to meet the needs of the staff and students within his building.

Rick was one of the teachers in Candytuft School who provided an inclusive classroom. He had been teaching for 25 years and at the time of this research was teaching, primarily, Grade 6 courses. Rick had obtained a Bachelor's degree in Elementary Education. He had experience teaching at a variety of levels and had taught all subjects. Interestingly, Rick recruited special needs students to be a part of his classroom because he felt he could make a big difference in these students' lives. Although he believed strongly in inclusion, he recognized his own personal limitations and the reality that not all students benefited from a fully inclusive placement. Rick had many success stories and experiences to share.

Observations

Data were also collected through the process of observation. The principals from Waxvine Secondary School, Celosia Community School and Johnny Jump-Up High School felt it would be valuable for me to view inclusive classrooms in their building even though the teachers had not been selected for this study. As a result, data from each of these observations was included in this study. A *Profile of Classroom Observations* is provided below.

Table 3. Profile of Classroom Observations

School	Grade	Subject	Identified out of total number of students	Support Staff
Celosia	Grade 6	Math & L.A.	6/20 (30%)	1.0
Waxvine	Grade 8	Social Studies	15/35 (43%)	1.0
Johnny Jump-up	Grade 8 Grade 7 – 9 Grade 9	L.A. Special Ed. Phys. Ed.	3/27 (11%) 6/6 (100%) 4/60 (7%)	0 2.0 2.0
Browallia	Grade 6	Math L.A.	6/33 (18%)	1.0
Dusty Miller	Grade 7/8	Modified Science	17/17 (100%)	1.0
Lady Slipper	Grade 5	French & Social Studies	4/25 (16%)	1.62
Candytuft	Grade 6 ---------- Grade 6	Science ---------- L.A.	3/24 (13%) ---------- 6/28 (21%)	1.0 ---------- 1.0

Celosia Community School: I observed one Grade 6 classroom over the course of one morning. The data collected were taken from the language arts and math lesson. At the beginning, the classroom teacher introduced me and asked me to speak to the students about my research. I spent some time visiting with students at their desks, observed their work after which, I observed the math and language arts lesson delivered by the classroom teacher.

The classroom seemed spacious because it was a large, bright and open classroom and there were only 20 students in the class. There were six students that had been identified as having special needs. Two teaching assistants shared one full-time position for one severely handicapped child. This child received almost all of her programming in a small room next door to the classroom. Only five of the six identified students were on IPPs, however, the sixth student was being assessed at the time of this study.

Waxvine Secondary School: I observed two classrooms during one afternoon at Waxvine Secondary School. The High Incidence Program (HIP), designed to offer individualized programs to students with more severe disabilities, was located in a small special education classroom. This classroom included a number of different work stations and was designed to provide life-skills instruction. Two students were working in their desks and two students were working at the computer station. These students were taught, directed, supervised and assessed by two teaching assistants who reported to the special education coordinator, a participant in this study.

The second observation I conducted was of a regular Grade 8 social studies class of 35 students. 15 of the 35 students were from the "B class" of students. One teacher and one teaching assistant worked together to deliver the program. The class was a double block which lasted 80 minutes.

Johnny Jump-up High School: Over the course of two full days, I viewed students in many different classroom situations. I documented an observation of a Grade 9 physical education class of approximately 60 students; four of whom had been identified as having special needs. The second observation was of a Grade 8 language arts class, which had three included special needs students and the third observation was of the special education classroom where pull-out programming was provided to twelve junior and senior high students.

The physical education class brought all of the Grade 9 students together for a lesson on social dance. Of the four identified special needs students, only two were in attendance. One of the students with disabilities was easy to identify. I was impressed by the regular students' willingness to assist and involve this student in the lesson. The second student had behavioural difficulties yet, in this setting caused no disruption at all. The two students that were absent had learning disabilities. This large class was facilitated by three teachers, two teaching assistants and one student teacher. One of the teaching assistants told me, only the behaviour student was fully included in the regular program. The others received their math and language arts in the pull-out special education classroom.

Although three students had been identified as having special needs in the regular Grade 8 language arts class, I could not identify any of them. All students appeared to be equally engaged in the conversation and were attending well to the video clip. Students with inappropriate behaviours captured my attention, however they were not the students with learning disabilities. After the class, Barbara mentioned she rarely adapted curriculum. Instead, she modified the program by varying expectations and methods of assessment. She also indicated only one of her special needs students was fully included in the regular program. The other two students attended the special education pull-out classroom for math.

My third observation was of a completely segregated special education classroom where instruction in math, language arts, social studies and science were provided to students on a pull-out basis (i.e., students left the regular program during the core courses to receive individualized or small group instruction in their area of need). Although this observation was not of an inclusive setting, it did provide valuable information about alternative methods of delivery.

There were two teaching assistants working in the special education room. One of the assistants was providing small group language arts instruction to a group of five students. The second assistant was working one on one with a student at a computer station. The remaining six students were working independently. The special education coordinator, Teresa, was responsible for individualizing the curriculum, planning and preparing lessons, as well as preparing for and supervising the teaching assistants. The teaching assistants were mainly responsible for the delivery and assessment of the programs.

Browallia Community School: I observed Julia, a first year teacher, deliver a math and social studies lesson to a large class of 33 Grade 6 students. Given the large number of students and the fact that the class was located in a relatively small portable, I perceived the class to be somewhat busy and chaotic. In addition to the student desks, there was a group work area, a reading nook, student cubbies and a computer station. As well, student work was creatively displayed on every inch of wall space.

Six of the 32 students in attendance were on some sort of individualized or modified program. The half-time teaching assistant , although primarily assigned to one student with a severe behaviour disorder, provided support and assistance to four of the six identified students seated along the back wall. The second part of the teaching assistant's assignment was to support a student in the other Grade 6 classroom. All three Grade 6 teachers had creatively scheduled the teaching assistant's time to maximize her support to students.

Dusty Miller Community School: Andrew taught primarily elementary students thus, in order to observe a class that fit the criterion of the study in terms of grade level, I opted to observe a double block of his Grade 7/8 modified science class. The class took place in the morning and finished just before lunch hour. Although the regular science curriculum was used as the basis for this program, the amount of time for and support on assignments had been increased, the expectations and assessment procedures had been modified and a greater variety of teaching strategies were used.

There was one full-time teaching assistant assigned to this class. On the day that I observed, the teaching assistant was working one on one with a student who had been working in the office because of a behavioural offence. The teaching assistant returned to the classroom for a brief period of time to consult with the teacher. The teacher explained that in addition to supporting students, this teaching assistant provided lessons, demonstrated lab experiments, assisted with lesson preparation and took responsibility for the class when he needed to provide technological support to students or teachers. Communication between the two was incredibly strong and respect for the other's work and talents was obvious.

Lady Slipper School: I spent one afternoon observing Candice's Grade 5 classroom where four of the 24 students qualified for special education funding. Two additional students, though not labelled, had considerable needs and received modified programming. Of the four funded students, one had Tourette's Syndrome, another had Fetal Alcohol Syndrome, a third student had a behaviour disorder and the fourth was a severely dependently, handicapped child who functioned at the cognitive level of a two year old.

For the first half of the school year, Candice operated with one full-time teaching assistant whose time was spent working with the severely dependently handicapped child. After a staffing change in January, the principal of her school was able to creatively budget for more teaching assistant time; an additional (0.62) assignment.

Candytuft School: I spent one afternoon observing two different Grade 6 classes. I found the first group of 24 students in the junior high science lab. Rick was demonstrating the concept of the vacuum at the front while the teaching assistant was setting up lab stations along the counters on either side of the room. Three students had been identified as having special needs; one with a behaviour disorder and two with learning disabilities. During the observation, none of the students appeared to be struggling. The only thing that made these students stand out was the fact that they received a different coloured assignment. I was later told these students received modified programming.

The second Grade 6 class, Rick's homeroom, had 28 students on the register however, only 24 were present at the time of my observation. I noticed an immediate difference between this class and the other in terms of student behaviour, attention and ability. Two teaching assistants started out in the classroom but only one remained throughout the lesson. The teaching assistant that continued in the classroom was hired to work, primarily, with a Fetal Alcohol student. At the beginning of the class the teaching assistant helped this student organize her language arts project. The student opted to work at a carrel in the back corner. I noticed that a second student chose to remove himself from the large group and had gone to work at a carrel in the front corner a short time into the period. Rick divided the remainder of the class into two groups for a spelling lesson.

The teaching assistant marked the spelling lesson with the larger group (those whom had opted to do the regular lesson) while Rick marked the assignment with the group that had chosen to do the accelerated or more advanced lesson.

Data Analysis

The essence of content analysis is the coding of data into categories. Although I approached the data systematically using techniques from grounded theory and then phenomenology, I observed that the process of data collection and analysis happened in an spiral of increasing complexity. Coyne and Smith (1985) wrote, "as one ascends through the various levels in the spiral, new dimensions of understanding are uncovered and new questions emerge which expand and support the findings" (Perry, 1994, p. 52).

According to Gall, Borg, and Gall (1996), an important tenet of interpretivistic research is to retain, as much as possible, the "feeling" of each participant's story (p. 29). This is consistent with qualitative, phenomenological methods. Therefore, the first level in the spiral was provided by the participants themselves as they shared their concerns, experiences and successes. Occasionally, a particularly evocative or poignant description would raise the hair on my arms or cause me to shiver. Perry (1994) called these meaningful moments "the critical moments of inquiry" and as such, they are highlighted throughout the text of this thesis (p. 20).

Immediately following each interview, I transcribed the data so as not to lose the meaning communicated through body language and voice tone. While transcribing I noted important references, recurrent themes, significant insights and personal responses. The process of transcribing the taped interviews, although time-consuming, proved to be invaluable and moved me to new levels of understanding. I noticed that the boundaries of my knowledge regarding inclusive education were expanding with each successive interview and questions I had not previously considered were beginning to emerge.

According to Gall, Borg and Gall (1996), data collection and data analysis should overlap since "what is learned at one point in time often is used to determine subsequent data collection activities" (p. 559). Thus, the interview transcripts were e-mailed to participants for verification of the data. I had asked that they also respond to my first level interpretations. This provided the participants with an opportunity to correct, clarify, add to or delete information and to respond to my preliminary interpretations. Between March and June 2001, all of the changes were made to the original transcripts, the feedback regarding my preliminary analysis was recorded and further clarifications were made by way of further e-mail correspondence.

A third layer of understanding came as I worked through the content analysis. Gall, Borg, and Gall (1996) suggested that "thick description" is the result of organizing data according to emerging categories. They defined a category as a construct; "a concept that is inferred from observed phenomena and that can be used to explain those phenomena" (p. 549). I used coloured highlighters and a numbering system to reveal the emerging categories or constructs. This process of category development was consistent with the principles of grounded theory. In other words, the recognized categories were "grounded" in the particular set of data I collected rather than being imposed upon the data (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2000, p. 138).

These categories were further developed and supported as I worked through the phenomenological approach. According to Gall, Borg, and Gall (1996), "researchers add depth to their descriptions by searching for themes present in the phenomena" (p. 549). Themes are defined as the "salient, characteristic features" of a phenomena; the conspicuous and prominent ideas which serve to define recurrent ideas (p. 550). From here, the data were analyzed, using analytic induction, constant comparison and typological analysis, in order to draw out and name the emergent categories, sub-categories and typologies.

A fourth analysis was achieved by combining the findings of this study with what was learned from the review of the literature. Gall, Borg, and Gall (1996) claim "in creating thick description, the researcher [should also] relate these data to other research findings reported in the literature" (p. 549). Throughout the research process, I read literature pertaining to inclusive education and educational decision-making. My perspective and beliefs about inclusion changed as I compared the realities of inclusion with what was written in the literature. The literature review presented in Chapter 2 and the excerpts featured throughout Chapter 5, provided an additional dimension of understanding.

As the reader experiences inclusion through the stories and perceptions of the participants and through the researcher's interpretations, consensus may or may not be the result. Thus, the final analysis is left to the reader. According to Barrit, Beekman, Bleeker, and Mulderik (2000) this is a desired result. "In the conduct of positivistic [or qualitative] research, individual variations among researchers' judgments (unreliability) can be overcome when there is dialogue about a phenomenon" (p. 12). In fact, phenomenological disagreements are a valuable part of the process.

This multi-level analysis was designed to provide a glimpse into the lives, feelings, emotions and experiences of teachers in inclusive Alberta middle schools. It is my hope that this modest effort will "evoke the quality of vividness in detailing unique and particular aspects of a life that could be my life or your life," and therefore involve the reader in a personal way (van Manen, cited in Crossman, 1996, p. 39).

Procedures for Trustworthiness

A number of actions were taken to ensure the trustworthiness of the data and data analysis: credibility, dependability, transferability and confirmability. As well, the issue of researcher bias was addressed.

Specific procedures were used to improve the credibility of this study. Improvements were made to the interview schedule upon the advice of peers, the pilot study participant and a research methods instructor. The pilot study, itself, brought to light a number of procedural difficulties which were easily resolved. The interviews were tape-recorded providing a verbatim record and the observation notes were transcribed. Interview transcripts, observation notes and my first level interpretations were e-mailed to participants for verification, correction, elaboration and confirmation. In all but two cases, the participants responded positively to both the transcripts and to my first level interpretations. Minor corrections were needed to confirm the accuracy of the data in the remaining two cases. Finally, credibility was also strengthened through the process of triangulation; the participants verified the interview data and observation notes and all subsequent communication consistently indicated that the themes I had identified were important.

Dependability referred to the ability to achieve the same or similar findings should the study be replicated. As part of the data analysis process, I was able to share my data and interpretations with two colleagues, not connected with the study, thus forming an audit trail. Both of these individuals recently completed qualitative research work and were familiar with qualitative methods. Their feedback revealed similar sets of themes and categories and provided a slightly different perspective. Their insight also contributed to my overall understanding of the data.

One of the expected outcomes of a successful qualitative research study was the concept of transferability; the extent to which the findings applied to other participants in other locations. Phenomenological research, by its very nature, strives to achieve a "thick" description of a phenomenon. I believe I have achieved this task. As a result, the reader is left to make the connections and comparisons to educators in schools throughout the province. Although the data and findings are most relevant to educators in the middle years, it is possible that the findings may also be applicable to educators in elementary and senior high schools, to education professionals, parents and educational researchers.

Finally, a confirmability audit of the data and of my journal entries would attest to the fact that all steps taken to collect and analyze data were conducted accurately, appropriately and in accordance with University of Alberta's Faculty of Graduate Studies standards and ethics. The effect of researcher bias was addressed since the participants confirmed I had accurately represented their perceptions, feelings, emotions and stories. As well, feedback from peers and colleagues regarding the construction of the interview schedule and the designation of themes and categories confirmed that my interpretations and representations were valid and important.

Limitations, Delimitations and Assumptions

Limitations – A number of factors were limitations of this study:

1. As a beginning researcher, I was limited by my ability to actively involve the participant, create an open atmosphere and respond effectively. As a result, the quality of the data collected was limited by my skill as a researcher.
2. The tape recorder was a limiting factor for some of the participants in that there was a noticeable difference in the kinds of responses when the tape-recorder was playing and when it was not.
3. Mechanical error was also a limitation. The tape recorder did not work for two of the interviews. In the first case, I was able to take notes and with the help of the participant, recreate our conversation in print form. In the second case, I lost all of the interview data and had to rely solely on my memory of the key points. In both cases, my recollection of the data was verified by the participants.
4. The participants were selected from the reputational sample provided by superintendents of the four school divisions and therefore, were not representative of all teachers, principals, assistant principals, counsellors and special education coordinators in Alberta.

Delimitations – This study was delimited to:

1. Obtaining information about inclusion in Alberta middle schools (Grades 5 – 9).
2. Four rural school divisions in Alberta.
3. Perceptions of teachers, principals, assistant principals, counsellors and special education coordinators working to include all students.
4. Data collected via 17 semi-structured interviews and one town hall meeting conducted between January and March 2001.

5. Data collected through observations of 10 classrooms and the following grades and subjects: Grade 5 math and language arts, Grade 6 social studies, science, math and language arts, Grade 7/8 modified science, Grade 8 social studies, Grade 9 physical education, a pull-out special education classroom and a High Incidence Program.

Assumptions – This study was conducted on the basis of the following assumptions:

1. All schools in Alberta are provided with block funding for regular students and additional grants for those students with special needs.
2. Interpretation of these policies translates into models of program and service delivery and therefore, vary from school to school and classroom to classroom.
3. There is a relationship between site-based management, the educational decision-making model and the ability to include special needs students.

Chapter Summary

This chapter presented the research design and methodology utilized in this study. It began with an in-depth description of qualitative research methods and the purpose for selecting this methodology. This was followed by a recounting of the pilot study. Detailed information regarding the participants, their schools, the school divisions and the observations was provided. The process of data collection and analysis was defined. The four procedures for addressing the trustworthiness of the study were presented along with methods for overcoming researcher bias. The chapter concluded with an explanation of the limitations, delimitations and assumptions that were a part of this study.

CHAPTER 4

DATA ANALYSIS AND PRESENTATION OF THE FINDINGS

The purpose of this study was to portray inclusion in Alberta during the middle school years through the participants' perceptions and interpretations, practical experiences, success stories and reflections. Specifically, participants were asked to define inclusion, describe inclusive practice and define success in inclusion. A qualitative, phenomenological approach, being interpretive and naturalistic by design, was selected for the purpose of this research. Phenomenologists are most concerned with the description of a phenomenon as it is seen through the perceptions, feelings and interpretations of their participants. Qualitative researchers use an inductive approach to analyze the data and construct a "picture that emerges slowly as the parts are collected and examined" (Crossman, 1996, p. 65).

Miles and Huberman (1986) suggest:

> From the beginning of data collection the qualitative analyst is beginning to decide what things mean, is noting regularities, patterns, explanations, possible configurations, casual flows and propositions. The competent researcher holds these conclusions lightly, maintaining openness and skepticism, but the conclusions are still there, inchoate and vague at first, increasingly explicit and grounded. (p. 22)

Throughout the data collection process, I realized an additional method was needed to organize, process, order and check the volume of data I had collected. Thus I turned to the approach used by Crossman (1996). She used two methodologies: a grounded theory approach to "discover relevant categories and the relationships among them" and a phenomenological approach to "describe and derive meaning from our human experience" (p. 46). The grounded theory approach yielded several procedural tools for analyzing the qualitative data while the phenomenological approach allowed the thick description associated with qualitative research. This chapter provides the two methodologies used to analyze the data.

Grounded Theory Approach

Crossman (1996) recommended the grounded theory approach because it emphasizes discovery. Cohen, Manion, and Morrison (2000) suggested "theory is emergent and must arise from particular situations; it is grounded on data generated by the research act" (p. 23). These authors identified three procedural tools for analyzing qualitative data: a) analytic induction, b) constant comparison and c) typological analysis.

The first tool, analytic induction, involved the following set of steps or procedures:

> 1. data are scanned to generate categories of phenomena.
> 2. relationships between these categories are sought.
> 3. working typologies and summaries are written on the basis of the data examined.
> 4. these are then refined by subsequent cases and analysis.
> 5. negative and discrepant cases are deliberately sought to modify, enlarge or restrict the original explanation/theory. (p. 151)

Throughout the data collection process, I found that this structured approach enabled me to organize and categorize the volume of data and to begin the process of labeling the emerging categories of phenomena.

Next, I used the second procedural tool known as constant comparison, wherein the data were compared across a range of situations (i.e., a variety of inclusive contexts and grade levels), times (i.e., both morning and afternoon observations), groups of people (i.e., administrators, special education personnel, counsellors, teachers and teaching assistants) and through a range of methods (i.e., interviews, observations and follow-up conversations). Cohen, Manion, and Morrison (2000) would suggest that this "process resonates with the methodological notion of triangulation" (p. 151). Furthermore, they cited Glaser (1978) to indicate:

> Constant comparison can proceed from the moment of starting to collect data, to seeking key issues and categories, to discovering recurrent events or activities in the data that become categories of focus, to expanding the range of categories. This process can continue through the writing-up process (which should be continuous), so that a model or explanation of the phenomena can emerge that accounts for fundamental social processes and relationships. (p. 151)

The process I utilized involved four steps. At first, I used a "color coding" system to identify the incidents and data related to each category. Next, I found it necessary to compare the incidents and data with the previous incidents and data to achieve an integrated category. Third, there were many pieces of data that were applicable to more than one category therefore, it was necessary to "set" the limits or boundaries for each category.

Finally, each category needed to be appropriately labeled or named. Crossman (1996) quoted Strauss and Corbin (1990) who claimed, "when concepts are grouped into categories, the categories have conceptual power because they are able to pull together around them other groups of related concepts or sub-categories" (p. 50).

The final procedural tool, typological analysis, was basically a classificatory process "wherein data are put into groups, subsets or categories on the basis of some clear criterion (e.g., acts, behaviour, meanings, nature of participation, relationships, settings, activities)" (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2000, p. 152). Typological analysis provided a secondary process of coding where the themes and descriptive codes were drawn together into sub-categories that represented subtypes of the more general set of phenomena. In creating typologies, Cohen, Manion, and Morrison (2000) quoted Lofland (1970) to reiterate that researchers must:

> 1. deliberately assemble all the data on how a participant addresses a particular issue—what strategies are being employed.
> 2. desegregate and separate out the variations between the ranges of instances or strategies.
> 3. classify these sets and subsets.
> 4. present them in an ordered, named and numbered way for the reader. (p. 152)

I opted to present the categories, sub-categories and related typologies in the same manner as was provided in the work done by Crossman (1996).

What follows are the five categories and related sub-categories and typologies that emerged as a result of analytic induction, constant comparison and typological analysis. Following the principles of qualitative research, the list of categorical details was composed by using relative and descriptive words and phrases from the participants' words.

Defining Inclusion – Category One

1. Common Characteristics
    - 1.1. placement in the home, community or local school.
    - 1.2. placement in the regular classroom.
    - 1.3. with appropriate accommodations or modifications.
    - 1.4. with appropriate resources and supports.

2. The Inclusive Context
    - 2.1. the classroom community.

    2.2. the school community.
    2.3. the local community.

Understanding Current Inclusion – Category Two

1. A Continuum of Values and Beliefs
    1.1. regarding students ... "There are certain kids that don't fit well." ↔ "I think all they need is for somebody to say, 'You know I believe in you.'"
    1.2. regarding the regular classroom ... "We've got to get 'em out of the classroom." ↔ "This is a place for all students."
    1.3. regarding teaching ... "The teacher needs to teach and the fact that these kids are in the class to start with is a challenge." ↔ "Giving to whatever child you have to work with what they need to be successful."
    1.4. regarding learning ... "Experience has shown us that students learn best in homogeneous groupings." ↔ "We all learn together."
    1.5. regarding assessment ... "We don't tend to go the higher level thinking skills with these kids." ↔ "You can't give them a crutch. Take them to the highest level they can go. She's rising to those expectations like you wouldn't believe."
    1.6. regarding educational decision-making ... "We are included to a certain extent. Probably not as much as I would like. I'm not sure we are always consulted." ↔ "Very much an entire staff approach and that is hugely important to where you are on that continuum and that's the most important thing."
    1.7. regarding collaboration ... "I find it to be a slight on my professionalism when they don't trust me to provide a program that I think suits that student." ↔ "We are very much a team...it's not mine to deal with alone."
    1.8. regarding communication ... "I think it is just established that it is really open and so they can come to me, informally, at any time." ↔ "The only way we were going to work really well together was to communicate together so we've created grade level meetings."

2. Educational Policy
    2.1. legalities
        - "... about what the law says [about] the right for handicapped children to have an education just like anyone else's education."
        - "Court cases represent the 'law' in educational decision-making."
        - "Every school in the province is required to take their resident students however they come, whatever condition they come in."
    2.2. provincial policy
        - "According to Alberta Learning there is no interpretation – students must be coded and have current testing on file."
        - "IPPs are required for all students taken out of the regular program of studies."
    2.3. school division policy
        - "The very first place we look for providing educational programs to students is in their neighbourhood school. And within that

neighbourhood school, within a regular Grade 1 or Grade 2 or Grade 8 classroom, as the case might be."

- "Policy is lived out in the day to day practice in schools."

2.4. school policy

- "Teachers are responsible for the program of all children in their classrooms."

Implementing Inclusion – Category Three

1. The Role of the Inclusive Administrator
   - 1.1. acts as a "gate keeper."
   - 1.2. hires experienced, flexible, "inclusive minded" staff.
   - 1.3. supports teachers by providing:
     - general, ongoing support.
     - suitable teaching assignments.
     - preparation time and teaching assistance.
     - flexible scheduling.
     - resources and materials.
     - professional development.
     - limited class sizes so that teachers can personalize instruction and provide appropriate support.
   - 1.4. builds inclusive school community and culture by:
     - leading by example through lived action.
     - "hiring staff that are flexible across grade levels."
     - continuing to teach; "be in the trenches."
     - being visible, accessible, approachable and involved.
     - providing thorough discipline based on mutual respect.
     - taking strategic action to involve parents and the community.
     - mediating between parents, the community and teachers.
     - advocating for the rights of all students.
   - 1.5. leads toward the merger of all services through collaboration:
     - encourages collaborative planning, team teaching and open communication.
     - participates as a member of a collaborative problem-solving team that invents solutions from the ground up.
     - coordinates services.
     - together with staff, budgets creatively.
     - involves staff in all decision-making.
     - empowers staff.

2. The Role of the Special Educator or Coordinator
   - 2.1. coordinates support services:
     - teaching assistants.
     - therapy – physical, occupational or speech.
     - outside agencies – hospitals, child welfare services, parole officers, etc.

- parent involvement.
- facilitates a support team.

2.2. creates clear communication system.

2.3. collaborates with all educators by:

- coordinating process of assessment, identification and coding of students.
- funding paperwork.
- IPP development.
- identifying appropriate modifications, accommodations.
- locating or developing materials and resources.
- encouraging a variety of teaching methods.

3. The Role of the Inclusive Classroom Teacher

3.1. fosters a learning community where "all students are seen as valuable citizens who have a right to learn and to contribute to the learning community."

3.2. sets a classroom climate that "assumes peer support" (students understand their role is to be supportive, accepting and tolerant of each other in academic, social and behavioural areas).

3.3. helps all students to develop their intellectual and creative potential.

3.4. respects and honours "each student's gifts and talents" by recognizing demonstrations of effort and achievement.

3.5. uses a variety of instructional strategies and assessments.

3.6. sees the curriculum as being interdisciplinary and works to "bridge learning in the classroom with the real world."

3.7. encourages parent involvement through open communication.

3.8. plans and teaches collaboratively with other members of the staff and community.

3.9. participates as a member of a collaborative problem-solving team.

3.10. recruits and trains students to be peer tutors and social supports for one another.

4. The Role of the Inclusive Teaching Assistant

4.1. supports all students by:

- assisting with note-taking, scribing, reading, etc.
- reinforcing organization and learner readiness.
- encouraging participation, effort and independence.
- reinforcing appropriate behaviour.

4.2. supports teachers by:

- providing services to a variety of students in individualized, small group and large group instruction.
- following students and "facilitating communication with all teachers."
- assisting with "lesson planning and preparation" or "lesson delivery."
- reinforcing behaviour.
- acting as a resource person, sharing talents.
- showing initiative and independence, being self-directed.

5. Administrative Decision-making Models

5.1. top-down model:
- "Oh, that would be the administrators. We are not always consulted."
- "I guess, formally, we don't involve staff. When the crunch comes down we have to decide."

5.2. top-down model with bottom up involvement:
- "There are dollars connected to decisions and because I am the one who is responsible for distributing those dollars, we work together as a team."
- "Teachers have a voice through committee meetings, etc., but ultimately the administration makes the decisions."

5.3. collaborative model:
- "Here are the resources that I have available. You now have identified the needs in your classroom. You guys go decide how to make it work."
- "I involve all of the key people and sometimes the whole staff."

5.4. learning community model:
- "... encouraging and reinforcing involvement, commitment, flexibility of all staff and the community...results in people broadening their scope of what they are willing to try, involves everyone and results in an inclusive mind-set"

6. Teaching Strategies

6.1. differentiates instruction
- "pace of learning", "extra time" for assignments, tests.
- multiple methods of delivery.
- "peer tutoring" and reciprocal support.
- flexible "group work" on projects and assignments.

6.2. focuses on multiple intelligence
- "choice" on assignments and method of presentation.
- individual focus – work "to be the best of their ability."
- an individual profile of strengths and needs for all students.
- "level of questioning suited to need."

6.3. provides accommodations and modifies curriculum
- "modified assignments" – fewer expectations, taped stories, typed notes, scribed written work.
- alternate evaluations.
- individual working "space."
- "organizational strategies."

6.4. is resourceful
- draws on the "skills and talents" of all stakeholders."Students are a resource."
- utlizes "practical strategies" from professional development

6.5. uses a project approach
- "Genre project","Pilot project","Student Tutors" and "The Vincent Project."

7. Student Issues

7.1. student placement

- based on "the best interest of the child."
- considers the "legalities of placement."
- "considers the safety factor for all students and staff."
- a "balancing act between the rights of the individual and the rights of the class."

7.2. student identification

- "proper identification is necessary to obtain funding for materials, resources and supports."
- "some students fall between the cracks","gray area students that don't qualify."
- students occasionally block process of support–"he doesn't want it."

7.3. big gaps in learning for students who have

- "moved a lot."
- "limited life experience; cultural deprivation; foster parent families; single-parent families; are from receiving and treatment homes."

7.4. appropriateness for all students

- it is "difficult to include behaviour disordered and emotionally disturbed children."
- there are "too many challenges."
- there are too many "disruptions [that] interfere with learning."

7.5. level of severity

- "As the cognitive gap increases it becomes more difficult."
- it "becomes more difficult the higher one goes in school."
- there are practical and logistical problems (e.g., physical care needs; physical space requirements, etc.).

7.6. impact on students

- "frustration for regular program students."
- "stigma for special needs students."
- "it doesn't matter how you do it, the kids all know the pecking order."

7.7. student involvement

- "severe kids do not have the ability or strategies to be able to help themselves."
- it is "critical for behaviour disordered kids to set goals and determine consequences."

8. Parent Issues

8.1. parents of special needs children

- "...are often very demanding."
- "request specific placements" (i.e., inclusive or segregated).
- will go "beyond the school level gate-keeper if dissatisfied."
- want to "trust a positive track record."
- want the "dollars attached to their child used for their child."

- "demand a part in the decisions regarding placement and programming."
- "need a variety of choices and options."

8.2. regular program parents

- "question the impact on regular program students."
- "demand programming for the gifted and talented."

8.3. parents need

- help with "learning to cope with their child's disability or condition."
- encouragement to pursue individualized assessment and testing.
- "instruction on how to provide homework help."
- help with parenting, behaviour management, etc.
- consideration of their changing role.

8.4. clear communication through

- update or information meetings, progress reports, e-mail, communication books and phone calls home.
- "involvement in program development" – (IPP).
- "honest and straight forward responses."

8.5. inclusion of parents through

- involvement in extra-curricular activities.
- "sharing of gifts, talents and skills in program areas."
- sharing of information (e.g., needs, interests, skills and abilities) about their children.

9. Financial Issues

9.1. "There just isn't enough money."
9.2. "It's called site-based management with very little control."

- block funding limits flexibility and choice.
- provincial directives for the assessment and coding of students is a concern.
- central offices impose budget restrictions.

9.3. there is a perception that provincial funding drives the inclusive movement because it is seen to be more cost effective.
9.4. "Inclusion is not cheaper" and "It needs to be supported."
9.5. costly student assessment is needed to identify and label students in order to secure additional government funding.
9.6. additional grant writing and fundraising (AC program, corporate sponsorships) is often required to provide resources and supports
9.7. support systems (e.g., Capital Health) are "lacking in funding" therefore, "there is a limited availability of supports."
9.8. professional development is limited because of limited funding.
9.9. there is a significant impact on classroom conditions – "class size."
9.10. teaching assistant pay is not adequate compensation for expected services.

10. Barriers to Inclusion

10.1. educational philosophy

- belief in a dual track system, curricular focus or leveled grading.
- "homogeneous groupings" has shown them, "it's the best way."

- "negative attitude" toward inclusive philosophy.

10.2. adminstrative practices
  - "personal philosophy" and methodology "does not support inclusion."
  - "administrative decision-making" prevents inclusion.
  - unable to provide "appropriate resources and supports."
  - bound by "budgeting process."

10.3. teacher practices
  - "skill, ability and attitude."
  - limited training in differentiation of instruction, modifying materials, making accommodations, etc.
  - "limited technology skills."
  - increased stress and dissatisfaction resulting from – "needs of students have increased" while supports and resources have decreased.
  - unable to cope with "increased performance expectations."

10.4. inadequate training
  - perception that "university preparation is inadequate."
  - "professional development not a quick fix."
  - teachers should be "change agents."

10.5. stress - a symptom of problems
  - education system "expects inclusion but does not support it."
  - "demands of difficult students are draining over time."

10.6. "time, time, time ..."
  - to plan, collaborate, differentiate, modify curriculum, individualize, accommodate, find resources, evaluate resources, evaluate students and collaborate with colleagues.
  - IPP writing - time consuming and cumbersome; unnecessary paperwork takes time away from students.
  - grant writing, funding applications, fundraising ventures "require time and manpower."
  - support meetings, IPP meeting, parent meetings, "on one's own time."

10.7. teaching assistants
  - inadequate "TA compensation" discourages collaboration.
  - concerns about "maximizing TA time for the students' benefit."
  - defining their role - "how to work with TAs in the classroom."
  - "piecing TA time together" results in "extra work for teachers."

10.8. current fiscal situation in education in Alberta

10.9. mixed messages from Alberta Learning
  - to include and individualize or meet provincial standards and expectations.
  - IPP - "a justification for funding" or "a working document."
  - rules, regulations, politics - "limit flexibility in schools" in terms of scheduling time; TA assignments; budgeting, etc.
  - participant uncertainty.

10.10. appropriateness for all students
    - "type and severity of disability" seen as a barrier.
    - "too much" of any one factor was a concern (e.g., too much behaviour, too many disruptions, too low functioning ...).
    - "to a point" - a concern "when the gap is too great" (academically, socially or emotionally).

10.11. forcing the inclusive model
    - inappropriate placements - "based on availability of resources rather than student need."
    - "staff react negatively" - sabotage attempts at inclusion.

10.12. current practices do not support inclusion
    - "continuity" from grade to grade, teacher to teacher, province to province and in case management.
    - collaboration is difficult in present structure.
    - "increased demands for communication."

10.13. parent involvement
    - "balancing the rights of the special needs child with the rights of all children to learn."
    - knowing "how to handle increasing parent involvement."
    - facilitating "appropriate communication and support."

10.14. class, school and school division size.
    - "large classes" prevent individualization, one on one assistance, opportunity for support.
    - "large schools" - "when we all know one another then it is so easy for us to know how we can help one another and how we can collectively sort out a situation."
    - "large school divisions" - "cannot provide the same supportive infrastructure" – "contracting support services is costly and availability is limited."

Assessing Inclusion – Category Four

1. Measurements
    1.1. "demonstration of growth" commensurate "with established goals."
        - academic, behavioural, social-emotional growth.
        - need to focus on the soft-skills; emotional intelligence.

    1.2. standardized achievement testing
        - limits needs-based, outcomes-based assessment and self-paced learning.
        - "forces a group teaching model."
        - "stressful for students" who may not have covered all curriculum.
        - "inappropriate use" - to assess teachers, evaluate schools, etc.

    1.3. common report card identifies accommodations and modifications.
    1.4. "individual program plans identify individualized goals and objectives."

2. Positive Outcomes of Inclusion
    2.1. for staff

- "improved support structure" for all staff.
- increased variety of teaching and assessment methods.
- "focus on individuals with a variety of strengths" and needs; "multiple intelligence."
- focus on communication collaboration, continuity and a shared ownership of students
- "student growth over time is hugely rewarding."
- school and "classroom climate is impacted greatly."
- "a common vision" and mandate "improves morale."

2.2. for regular program students

- sense of belonging, connectedness, community.
- increased sensitivity and caring, acceptance of diversity and tolerance of others.
- "experience success in a variety of ways" beyond the academic.
- "opportunity to assist and support others."
- focus on multiple intelligence, citizenship and global skill development.
- sense of justice - "fairness does not always mean things are equal."

2.3. for students with disabilities

- sense of belonging, connectedness, community.
- "improved self-motivation, self-image."
- socialization, emotional development.
- "quality of life experiences; stimulation."
- "experience success in a variety of ways" beyond the academic.
- "access to broader curriculum."
- "allows for non age-dependent peer relationships."
- "opportunity to assist and support others."
- focus on multiple intelligence, citizenship and global skill development.

3. Negative Outcomes of Inclusion

3.1. for staff

- "forcing a model" results in anger and hostility.
- limits or "discourages some teaching styles."
- requires additional time for preparation, planning, collaboration, modifying materials and assessments, finding and evaluating resources, meetings, etc.
- "calls for a merger of special education and regular education," which is threatening to some.
- frustrations with the politics and costs involved—"I think our teacher's time is far better spent with students rather than having to do reams of paperwork," (IPPs).

3.2. for regular program students

- "teachers' attention and time is often divided."
- "negative or disrupting influence" of some special needs students.

    - as curricular demands increase, "time on task is critical."
    - "a stressed teacher is an ineffective teacher."
  - 3.3. for students with disabilities
    - "placement in the regular classroom does not guarantee" that an appropriate program is being provided.
    - the current process of assessment and labeling, "in order to secure funding," is often "stressful for the special needs student."
    - there are "physical space" and "resource limitations" in a regular classroom.

Supporting Inclusion – Category Five

1. Human Resources
   - 1.1. inclusive philosophy
     - "belief that everyone is a different person, coming from a different place" and that "we all belong."
     - "case by case basis" - consider each individual's learning needs.
     - "shared responsibility and ownership of students."
   - 1.2. positive attitude
     - willingness to try, change, adapt, be flexible.
     - "open mentality about budgeting and about people."

2. Supports
   - 2.1. money to provide
     - adequate teaching assistant time, planning and preparation time, collaborative time.
     - materials, resources and supports.
     - flexibility in timetable and scheduling arrangements.
     - professional development opportunities.
   - 2.2. time to
     - plan, individualize, modify and accommodate, meet and collaborate with colleagues and support personnel, communicate, locate and evaluate resources and participate in ongoing training and development.
   - 2.3. collaboration
     - "willingness to share resources and strategies."
     - teaming divides work - "can spell each other off."
     - focuses on individual strengths - "we all have something to contribute."
     - improves communication and continuity.
   - 2.4. communication - "we're all on the same page."
     - open communication with all involved stakeholders (e.g., parents, teachers, teaching assistants, support personnel, administrators).
     - ease of communication (e.g., e-mail, phone calls, time to meet, etc.).
     - "collegial community."
   - 2.5. continuity in ...
     - "student programming from grade to grade."

- record keeping, IPP development and reporting from grade to grade, school to school and province to province.
- place of residence.
- "student support at home."

2.6. flexibility in

- teacher and teacher assistant assignments, timetabling and scheduling
- programming options for students.
- teaching methodology.

2.7. support meetings

- student issues (e.g., health concerns, learning styles, behavioural issues, etc.).
- teaching strategies (e.g., differentiating instruction, emotional intelligence, small group, large group, technology, modifying resources, IPP development and so on).

2.8. project approach

- recognizes individual need and ensures student growth through positive motivation.
- considers learning styles.

3. Support Personnel

3.1. administration

- "creates an inclusive community" - philosophy, shared vision, goals and objectives.
- coordinates services.
- facilitates team process, collaborative model.
- "mediates between parents and teachers."
- "creative budgeting" to provide required resources and supports.

3.2. other personnel

- "teaching assistants assigned to the classroom rather than an individual student."
- central office coordinators - assist with guidance and counseling, student assessment and funding paperwork, crisis intervention, provide case management.
- "psychologists, student assessment specialists."
- therapy staff - physiotherapy, occupational therapy, speech therapy, audiology - contracted services are often expensive and limited.
- outside supports—Child Welfare, People for Disabilities, Sheltered Workshop, Native Liaison, Probation Officers, etc.
- a "master teacher"—a central office or school based person who locates, evaluates and develops resources for teachers.

4. The school itself

4.1. size of the school

4.2. configuration of grades

- elementary/junior high—"provides scope for peer relations that are not age dependent, special projects."

    - junior high/senior high—more likely to force a curricular, streamed focus.
- 4.3. physical design or lay-out
    - "wheelchair accessibility."
    - "space in classrooms" to accommodate special needs students.
    - pod structure with an open space in the middle promotes flexibility between classrooms, groupings, etc.

Summary

Crossman (1996) cited Strauss and Corbin (1990) who claimed, "In such a structured and limited format, it may be difficult to capture the complexity of the phenomena identified" (p. 56). The outline format provides little in the way of detailed explanations or descriptions however, it does provide a thorough review of the central phenomena. From this starting point, I was able to organize the data and rearrange the pieces into meaningful parts in order to better understand or "conceptualize" the "descriptive narrative" of inclusion in the middle school years (Crossman, 1996, p. 57). While the structured approach may be a limitation of grounded theory, Perry (1994) suggested, "It may also be a strength of the method because it forces the researcher to make choices and to focus on what are possibly the most important discoveries" (p. 261).

Phenomenological Approach

The phenomenological approach was used to go beyond the list of categorical details in order to recreate the full picture of inclusion in the middle school years. Van Manen (1990) stated:

> The aim of phenomenology is to transform lived experience into a textual expression of its essence – in such a way that the effect of a text is at once a reflexive, re-living and a reflective appropriation of something meaningful: a notion by which a reader is powerfully animated in his or her own lived experience. (p. 36)

Thus, qualitative researchers attempt to make sense of a phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them. "Meanings" are of prime importance and "have a quality of undeniability" (Miles & Huberman, 1986, p. 15).

Phenomenology has no set procedure. According to van Manen (1990), "phenomenology is to accomplish the impossible." He cautioned researchers to be aware that "lived life is always more complex than an explication of meaning can reveal" (p. 18). Although the description provided through phenomenology cannot ever fully recreate the participant's experience, Miles and Huberman (1986) suggest "words, especially when they are organized into incidents or stories, have a concrete, vivid, meaningful flavor that often proves far more convincing to a reader" (p. 15). Consequently, it is in this section that the stories and experiences of the participants come to life in an expressive, evocative and descriptive account. Given the number of participants and the variety of roles they represent, the reader may find it beneficial to keep Table 2, *A Profile of the Participants*, close at hand while reading this next section.

How Is Inclusion Defined?

Common Characteristics

The data clearly illustrated there were four commonly accepted characteristics that defined inclusion: a) placement of all students in the regular, home or community school, b) in the regular classroom, c) with appropriate programming, accommodations or modifications and d) with the required resources and supports. In addition to the common characteristics, the participants talked about the roles of the involved stakeholders, identified four administrative decision-making models and addressed a variety of issues and barriers to inclusion. These additional characteristics of inclusion will be addressed within this chapter.

The phenomenological analysis revealed word choices and phrases that framed each participant's interpretation. For example, of the 17 participants interviewed, only the administrators mentioned *placement in the regular school, home school or community school*. They tended to view inclusion as a school based phenomena and focused on the formal policies and legalities associated with inclusion.

In a few cases, teachers alluded to the school community by way of example. Kerri suggested the staff works together for the benefit of all the students included in our school community (Interview with Kerri, p. 3). Andrew also highlighted the community aspect of his school when he said, "Anyone who has ever taught a child in this building or will be teaching a child in this building, is considered a stakeholder" (Interview with Andrew, p. 13). Generally, however, the participants tended to view inclusion as a classroom-based phenomena and referred to the inclusion of students with disabilities in the regular classroom.

Just over half of the participants (8 out of 17) utilized inclusive language when referring to inclusion while the other half drew upon terminology associated more with the traditional, dual-track special education model. For example, Kerri used the words "all students" (Interview with Kerri, p. 2). Rick talked about meeting the needs of all students; "giving them what they need to be successful" (Interview with Rick, p. 17). Miriam provided the most extensive definition of inclusion. "The most inclusive environment is what is the first choice for all children, which would be the home school in their own community, in a regular classroom without support and we build from there" (Interview with Miriam, p. 25).

Barbara and Alison, on the other hand, provided a more tentative, traditional perspective. "I guess inclusion would be trying to integrate students with individual learning needs into regular programs" (Interview with Barbara, p. 1). Later Barbara added, "I still think the best way to meet the needs of a number of these kids is the pull-out program" (p. 10). Alison's definition emphasized a focus on the traditional streamed approach:

> When we are talking about students with special needs, I think we need to talk about the lower end of the spectrum. From the division level, they talk about inclusion as kids in the regular program, they don't want any homogeneous groupings of, you know, top level kids. Lower level kids are to be in the regular classroom. Though we say that, that's really not quite true either. (Interview with Alison, p. 1)

Variations in the definitions were created by the variability in the terminology used to describe the inclusive environment (e.g., *most inclusive environment, least restrictive environment)*, the placement of students *(e.g., integrated, mainstreamed, putting into, having,)* and the terminology used to identify students (e.g., *all students or children, regular students, general students, special learners, special needs students, students with disabilities, handicapped students, low-end students, lower academic students, individual learning needs, behaviour disordered, emotionally disturbed, severe or profound students*). This variance was significant because it illuminated the subtle differences in the participants' perspectives. The majority agreed with Kerri, who said, "Although the definition of inclusion is a bit broad, if you get too specific, there are exceptions to every rule" (Interview with Kerri, p. 3).

The Inclusive Context

An interesting finding related to the "place" or "context" where inclusion took place in schools. There appeared to be approximately three ways of conceiving "place" – the classroom community, school community and learning community. Since teachers generally viewed inclusion as a classroom-based phenomena it was easy to discern "place" in their descriptions of inclusion. Administrators referred to inclusion within the school community and thus, inclusion for them was a school-based phenomena. For the participants from Dusty Miller Community School, "place" was defined as the overall learning community that extended beyond school walls and included parents, students and stakeholders in the local community.

The participants from Johnny Jump-up High School described their classrooms as independent and distinct learning communities which were dependent on the philosophy and practice of each individual teacher. As a result, there was little connection to the greater school community and collaboration between classrooms was minimal. Barbara suggested, "That is how I would see it defined here and how it is practiced." (Interview with Barbara,

p. 1). Walter and Betty claimed that their schools would be categorized similarly. Walter concluded:

> While there may be an over-riding policy mandating inclusive practice it often does not get interpreted that way. I think you'll find that each school interprets it a little differently and every teacher interprets it a little differently. Teachers come to the table with different skills and attitudes and those two will determine what inclusion looks like in a classroom. (Interview with Walter, p. 2)

From the top-down, these school districts continued to support the traditional, dual track special education model. As well, there was tremendous variety in philosophy and practice from school to school, classroom to classroom and teacher to teacher. Even so, the new administration of Celosia Community School was making efforts to move to a more inclusive model. "We have not achieved what we want to by any means. It's too much, but we're hoping that in a few years we will have it to where it's very workable" (Interview with Betty, p. 7).

Where there existed pockets of inclusive practice, there were educators attempting to implement inclusion with varying degrees of success. Rick described the frustrations of providing an inclusive program amidst a variety of opposing philosophical perspectives. He said:

> I get these kids who, I mean, there's no question that their programs were modified, yet there was no documentation about what those modifications were… and I actually spoke to my colleagues about, "Don't give a report card to the parent and then put something else in the cum record that says this is the reality. Mom and Dad need to know the reality too and I need to know the reality at the beginning of the year, not all of a sudden, I'm running into trouble and I see what's going on. I'm sorry that's just not acceptable." And part of that problem is everything's okay until they get to my classroom; that makes me the jerk. I can't send these kids to Grade 7 the way they are. We need to fix something. (Interview with Rick, p. 13)

Although Rick's administrator encouraged inclusion and provided a collaborative decision-making model, the majority of the teachers continued to support the traditional special education model (Interview with Walter, p. 13). Rick emphasized the importance of the collaborative decision-making model and suggested, "Attempting inclusion amidst a staff with extreme opposing philosophical viewpoints has got to be a difficult task for the administration." He concluded, "It doesn't work. In order for inclusion to work, you need continuity. You've got to have it. You know, continuity is a big thing" (Interview with Rick, p. 14).

Allan and Patricia claimed that Waxvine Secondary School was inclusive even though they provided clustered "B classes" for "lower academic kids" and a segregated High Incidence Program (HIP) for more severe students (Waxvine Interview, p. 9). When I asked about the clustered group, Allan replied:

> Well it is a clustered group and they have the same curriculum, but again differentiated instruction. They still take the achievement exam so they get the same material. And this is not something that we would like to say publicly, but most of the time those are the kids that are going to go into the 13, 23, 33 program and so maybe we've sort of labelled them a bit early but they are not in a deficit situation where we say, "You can't get out of this class." (p. 12)

Allan added, "The only concern we have at this point is that we don't have the high flyers in there for them to model and aspire to" (p. 20). The HIP kids were included in the regular program for their options which was equivalent to 40% of their time. Patricia explained, "60% of the time they are in their own room doing their core and they do a living skills component" (p. 27). Patricia and Allan commented, "The staff decided this was the route we were going to go and we all bought into it" (Waxvine Interview, p. 20). Within this vision, the staff worked together to keep students in the regular program wherever possible by providing accommodations, creating a clear communication system and by structuring in flexibility.

The learning community in Browallia Community School was "very teamwork oriented." Furthermore, the staff supported the philosophy that the school was the "place" where inclusion should take place. Julia claimed, "In a school like this where the philosophy is so inclusive, everybody kind of works together for the benefit of all the kids so even if they are not included in the classroom they are still included in the school community" (Interview with Julia, p. 11). For the most part, all students were placed in and were a part of the regular classroom. Accommodations and modifications were made for special needs students within the classroom. Students were removed only for extreme behaviours, physical care needs and so on. Brad described the school's timetable, classroom arrangements, as well as the school's physical design and suggested these features supported inclusion in that they provided for flexibility in scheduling, class size arrangements and teaching practice. Collaboration and open communication among all staff members, including those in support roles, appeared to be a critical characteristic of their program.

Marjorie and the staff of Dusty Miller Community School offered a slightly different perspective. At first, Marjorie suggested, "Maybe we kind of misled you about inclusion. We actually have two classes in this school which are modified programs." She continued, "The alternative used to be for those kids to go to a program" in another community, "so to me they are now here in their community school" (Interview with Marjorie, p. 12). The inclusive context in Dusty Miller Community School differed from all other schools in this study since inclusion was related to the overall learning community. To illustrate, Marjorie provided the following example:

> One of the things that we have done is that we have talked about inclusion as though it's a geographical thing. So we are going to put a helmet on this kid and wheel him into the classroom and if he's in there, then he is included. Well, that's just nonsense because he can be physically present and not be included. I mean if you think of the kids in Australia who go to school by radio, they are very much members of a learning community. They are not physically present. A child can be physically absent and be included in some way ... there needs to be some kind of a bridging and connection to that child's situation ... they are a valuable member of that learning community." (p. 12)

The learning community of this school extended beyond the physical boundaries of the school and embraced all stakeholders in the local community. This philosophy was lived through the actions and interactions of the staff in that the entire school team worked together in a multitude of ways to include all children and their families. Parents and care-givers were encouraged to take an active role in their children's education both within the school and at home. All children were provided with a program tailored to meet their needs whether it be full-time in a regular classroom, in a modified program, in a special project or within any combination of the available options. Student programs were "based only on certain needs." Marjorie concluded, "They are otherwise still a part of the learning community, a mixed population" (pp. 12 – 13).

A Continuum of Values and Beliefs

Each of the examples provided above differed in subtle and yet significant ways. As Kerri observed, "Inclusion is different from school to school because school philosophies are different. Even though we have a division policy that says inclusion is a good thing… how that in fact comes out…is in very different realities" (Interview with Kerri, p. 3). Thus, analysis of the data related to "perceptions of inclusion" brought to light a continuum of attitudes, beliefs, values and viewpoints that, when taken together, provided a foundation for understanding inclusion and revealed the underpinnings for administrative or teaching practice. As well, the participants' interpretations of provincial, school division and school-based educational policy tended to inform their practice. The result of this data analysis was that the participant's "current understanding" of inclusion was revealed.

The term "current understanding" was selected to illustrate that participant perspectives were not static. In all but one case, there was evidence to suggest that perspectives changed over time as one gained knowledge, experience and training. For example, as a first year teacher, Julia recognized that her idealistic notion of inclusion had been changing. She commented, "I've discovered there are some circumstances where maybe you can't include kids and kids who would be better off in a different situation. I've seen it work though, so that's a good thing. I'm encouraged about that" (Interview with Julia, p. 12).

Alison, the veteran teacher in the study, observed that her long standing staff had "gone around with the inclusive debate too." They had explored the "pros and cons" of the traditional and inclusive models and had concluded that the traditional approach was the most effective method for the majority of students in their school. She explained, "If we thought it would make a difference, we would make a change" (Interview with Alison, p. 13). Barbara, another veteran teacher, was the only participant to hail the "good old days."

She stated, "When I was teaching in the 1980s, we had the UF Fund which had money galore. We could have all the pull-out programs we wanted and that was really the way to go" (Interview with Barbara, p. 10).Barbara's perspective was one of the most traditional viewpoints exposed by the data.

Walter commented, "Teachers hold different beliefs, sometimes at opposite ends of the spectrum and all seemingly under the guise of inclusion." He explained:

> Some teachers have the teacher aide take the child out of the classroom doing completely different materials but, because they are on the register, believe that that's inclusion. Others keep all students in the regular classroom, adapt materials for those in need and use teaching assistants creatively. (Interview with Walter, p. 2)

Janice remarked, "I very rarely run into anybody who says these types of kids don't belong. I think teachers attempt to keep all kids as close to the normal program, the regular program as they can be" (Interview with Janice, p. 2). Rick argued he knew of colleagues who still believed, "If the kid spells six words wrong, they're special needs kids. We got to get 'em out of the classroom." He concluded, "So you have the whole range of beliefs" (Interview with Rick, p. 12).

Regarding Students and The Regular Classroom – Regardless of their philosophical orientation, preferred teaching methodology or beliefs about inclusive practice, all of the participants in this study demonstrated respect and concern for students. Their degree of passion and commitment did not appear to be correlated to their support or lack thereof, for inclusive programs. For example, Julia mentioned, " I think all kids need an opportunity for growth" (Interview with Julia, p. 8). Kerri talked about the importance of making "a space for all students" (Interview with Kerri, p. 4). Marjorie placed students in the "team. We all have something to offer" (Interview with Marjorie, p. 9). Andrew went beyond traditional boundaries. He talked about "caring for children, wanting to be amongst the kids to see what they are doing and knowing the kids." Andrew even provided weekend respite care for one special needs student and his family (Interview with Andrew,

p. 8). Rick spoke about his ability to work with all students and claimed he hand picked students with disabilities whose lives he felt he could influence.

> People don't believe in these guys and then, as a result, they don't believe in themselves and you can see them. You can pick them out. I've already picked out two Grade 5 kids that I'm going to definitely have in my classroom next year because all they need is for somebody to say, "You know, I believe in you enough to hammer you when I need to hammer you." (Interview with Rick, p. 18)

Even Barbara mentioned, "You need to look realistically at the needs of kids" and argued "a teacher's time is best spent with students." (Interview with Barbara, pp. 9 – 10).

All of the participants talked about the need to *individualize, modify, accommodate and do whatever is necessary to meet the need of students*. Patricia remarked, "I think people are beginning to realize that these are our students" (Waxvine Interview, p. 29). Allan commented, "Parents don't just send us the good ones and keep the other ones at home. They are all here" (p. 29).

Nevertheless, only 5 of the 17 participants felt strongly that the regular classroom was an appropriate placement for all students. One inclusion advocate suggested, "The only time these children leave the classroom is to write an exam because I don't think it's fair to the other kids to have them muttering in the background while they are writing an exam. But otherwise, they are all here." (Interview with Andrew, p. 7). Miriam stated, "Our little guy is far better off here, than he would be if he were in a life skills program" (Interview with Miriam, p. 21). "He causes the most smiles in this school, more than almost anybody else I know, so his gift is his ability to make people smile" (p. 27). Miriam believed there was value in being reminded "of the challenges he faced and coped with on a day to day basis" (p. 21). Kerri described a situation where a student who "didn't know how to be in the classroom" was successfully re-integrated over time "and now spent almost every day being productive" (Interview with Kerri, p. 3). Rick also described a case where a student "never learned how to function in a class. She didn't have the opportunity. She loves being part of the class and you can see it… being part of the class is really important for her" (Interview with Rick, p. 7). Regarding another student though, he admitted, "He might do better in a quiet solitude type of place," yet "I think he needs the stimulation of the classroom as well" (p. 4).

The remaining twelve participants believed, "There is definitely a limit to the appropriateness for some students" (Interview with Candice, p. 2). During the town hall meeting, the Director of Services suggested it had been expressed "quite loudly" that there were "four big catch areas" of students who may benefit from alternate placements; "those with severe learning disabilities, those whom have significant behavioural difficulties, those whom have outstanding capabilities (i.e., the gifted and talented) and perhaps the IOP type students who might find a junior high stream program too rigorous academically" (Town Hall Meeting, p. 10).

The participants in this study commented on the "day to day" concerns of including students with severe needs. For example, at least four participants suggested it was best to remove students in need of *gastrointestinal feeding, diapering, toileting, for physiotherapy* and so on. Many commented on the *physical space requirements* and the *theoretical inclusion* of severe children. "For teachers with severe children attached to their classrooms, primarily the programs are delivered by teacher aides" (Interview with Miriam, p. 15). To illustrate, Betty provided the following example.

> There is one child in Grade 6 that is totally out of program. She has a startling disorder and so they have to be really careful. Kids close books and she startles and then, she goes into a seizure, so that has been really limiting her access to the classroom. She works a lot in this little room next door. (Interview with Betty, p. 12)

The majority also believed the regular classroom was not an appropriate placement for students with behaviour disorders or severe emotional disabilities. Janice talked about the "subjective too much line" that teachers experienced (Interview with Janice, p. 6). Alison concurred, "There comes a time when you've got to say, no. Too disruptive. You've got to remove. You've got to take that person out" (Interview with Alison, p. 12). Barbara spoke about the frustration for both the regular and the special needs students. "They want to quit and they want me to quit. Can't do it. And what about the rights of the others [students without disabilities] to learn?" (Interview with Barbara, p. 10). Marjorie voiced the perspective of the majority when she said, "Sometimes it works and sometimes it doesn't" (Interview with Marjorie, p. 9).

Rick argued the same could be true for regular program students. He described a scenario where one regular program student had a "meltdown" and needed to go "cool down in the office" (Interview with Rick, p. 5). Rick described the "day to day" nature of dealing with the behaviours of all students in the regular classroom. Regarding one student, identified has having a behaviour disorder, he provided:

> Today is a day in particular where he is not doing well. If he gets to the point where he's out of control, then I bring him to the office and he sits there and he just works. There's been other days when he does fine. Sometimes he takes himself out ...he goes to his cubicle and while I'm teaching the lesson, this little sign comes up with the big words HELP on it. He's that kind of guy right...a great sense of humour...so I think he really needs the social interactions. He's just got to learn to be in there. (p. 4)

Betty also argued, "never, never, never, not ever" should the behaviour disordered student be removed from the regular classroom.

> I don't like to see behaviour students removed. To me a child with a behaviour problem should never be put in a special ed. classroom. They are much better off in a regular program where regular program kids can model appropriate behaviour. Regular program kids can cope with them much better than special ed. kids can. They can regroup and say, "Oh, okay. Johnny's going off the wall. Big deal!" and then get back to work. (Interview with Betty, p. 20)

Even so, she recognized that for students with behaviour disorders or emotional disabilities, regular class placements did not always facilitate a positive, supportive or inclusive learning environment.

Eight of the 17 participants commented on the "social isolation" that behaviour students experienced and suggested this scenario tended to, "become more serious with age" (Interview with Candice, p. 2). Miriam encouraged educators to ask:

> Are we baby-sitting, mainstreaming or segregating? Keeping children with their age appropriate grouping is only one thought on inclusion. If the child doesn't fit that, in that he does not benefit from the placement, then what? What we are essentially doing is excluding the child socially so for instance, this little fellow that functions at a pre-kindergarten level might even be better off in a Kindergarten class, you know? But what happens in the regular class is that he becomes excluded from his age appropriate group and the older the kids get, the farther the gap gets, the more

> exclusion he suffers from that group, even though he is included in a regular mainstream program. (Interview with Miriam, p. 23)

In the instances where students were removed, they were sent to the office, the library, the special education room or the hallway. Alison commented, "That's not a place for the kid to be either, to be relegated to the hallway. So it becomes in the best interest of the kids to have them out working on their work in the special ed. classroom" (Interview with Alison, p. 4). Five others felt strongly that students should be placed in programs suited to their needs and thus, supported a segregated special education or pull-out approach. They suggested that students could be socialized when "included in their phys. ed. program and their options" (Interview with Barbara, p. 1).

For as much as Miriam believed in inclusion, she also commented on the benefit of being able to "seek the support of the segregated behaviour program" for regular program students who were too disruptive, unorganized or unable to cope emotionally (Interview with Miriam, p. 9). She suggested that educators need flexible options and that whenever possible, "try to integrate behaviour students as they are integratable. The sooner they can be moved back into the mainstream the better" (Interview with Miriam, p. 18).

Regarding Teaching and Learning – Much of what the participants expressed about the appropriateness of the regular classroom stemmed from their beliefs about teaching and learning. The participants provided a variety of perspectives fuelling the debate over the benefits of tracking and streaming students versus a more heterogeneous and individualized approach.

Marjorie indicated, "Some believe they can offer the best program in a homogeneous situation where the kids and the curriculum are as much alike as is possible" (Interview with Marjorie, p. 2). She suggested she would encourage inclusion with parents and teachers, "because that is where I come from and I believe it's best for the school community" (Interview with Marjorie, p. 2). According to Barbara:

> The teacher needs to teach and the fact that these kids are in the classroom to start with is a challenge. Either your energy has come over here so you leave them or your energy is with the regular kids, instead of these kids, which means that

> somebody loses. I don't think you can do it. To say you can deliver three programs in a class. No! In some classes you've got to be there for the regular kids...and we are seeing the results. I think you need to look realistically at the needs of kids. (Interview with Barbara, p. 10)

Allan stated, "I think most teachers try to do their very best for all students" but recognized "everyone has a different comfort zone" (Waxvine Interview, p. 35). Even the most inclusive minded teachers expressed concerns about their ability to "meet the needs of all students" at all times (Interview with Candice, p. 3). Overall, only four participants claimed they felt completely comfortable and capable of teaching all students in the regular classroom.

As a principal, Miriam had observed "a great deal of resistance" from upper elementary and junior high teachers when it came to "having children that require differentiation in the classroom." She believed this reluctance stemmed from the "extra work involved, limited university training in that direction" and in some cases, "a different philosophical mind set" She quoted teachers who had said, "Why weren't they failed at that level? Why aren't they in some special education program and out of my hair?" Miriam concluded, "and it's not that they don't care about children, they just don't know how they are going to accommodate that need" (Interview with Miriam, p. 16). In her experience, teachers expressed concerns about the following real-life dilemma.

> If I'm teaching Grade 5, I should be teaching Grade 5 curriculum to Grade 5 kids because, guess what, next year there is going to be an achievement exam and that curriculum is going to be tested. So hello, when am I supposed to do this differentiating of curriculum? (p. 16)

Over the course of thirteen years, Patricia had observed a great deal of change and growth in the willingness of teachers to include students with disabilities in their classrooms.

> In 1983, I first started putting special needs kids into the phy. ed class and the teachers would whine and snivel and everything else. I said, "Fine. You come in a teach my segregated class and I'll come down and teach your phys. ed class and then you can see." And so they stopped and realized. It takes some training. Now people realize these are our students. You have to teach them. If you want the job you have to go with what you are given and that is just the way it is. (Waxvine Interview, p. 29)

Allan added, "The only people that don't like it is, if you teach physics or chemistry or something like that in high school" (p. 28). He explained how many high school teachers, with a strong curricular focus, found it difficult to accommodate students.

Regarding Programming and Assessment – One of the underlying tenets of inclusive philosophy was the need to normalize education for students with disabilities. All of the participants were expected to include special needs students in their classrooms and yet there was tremendous variance in their beliefs about normalizing the situation. Although a few claimed, *it doesn't matter whether they are special education students or regular students, you can't give them a crutch* or *take them to the highest level they can go*, the majority expressed concern over whether inclusion was *the right thing to do* as well as, *their ability to provide appropriate programming for all students in their classroom.* Janice indicated the result was that teachers frequently asked, "How are we, in practice, going to deliver that?" (Interview with Janice, p. 8).

At first Barbara noted, "Really what changes is your delivery…the content becomes fairly immaterial." A short time later however, she countered, "I don't know why we can't say, we've tested them on this, they've scored here and on the basis of this, they need an alternate program" (Interview with Barbara, p. 9). Betty suggested, "When the delay is extremely significant … no ordinary teacher can teach the regular curriculum and deliver a program designed to meet that student's needs because their needs are just too great. Imagine having one or two, let alone, five or six in a classroom" (Interview with Betty, p. 19).

Julia claimed, "curriculum programming and planning and stuff like that" was important, yet maintained that the focus must be placed on "each individual's progress based on their individualized program" (Interview with Julia, p. 7). Rick described a scenario where a student in his classroom, who had been "wasting away in a segregated program," was "rising to his expectations like you wouldn't believe" and said that most of these kids just need "someone that believes in them" (Interview with Rick, p. 12). Andrew also advocated individual programming and assessment and justified this by saying, "where there is an appropriate fit … three of my kids managed to pull off a 70% or higher on the provincial achievement exams" (Interview with Andrew, p. 4).

A number of participants described their concerns about provincial achievement exams. Miriam suggested,

> There is this expectation that you are a failure as a teacher or a failure as a school if your achievement exams aren't up to snuff, regardless of the number of special needs children you have. It is this perception that puts undue stress on teachers. Now, would the system be different if we didn't have the provincial achievement exams? You bet! Now, would it change things completely? Probably not. There is still more curriculum to cover in the higher grades and there is less tolerance in teachers in general, less tolerance for those children who do not make the grade. (pp. 25 - 26)

Barbara was one of the few participants to recognize the stress the achievement exams caused for students. She spoke about the students in the Integrated Occupations Program and suggested, because they followed a different curriculum, "there must be a better way" (Interview with Barbara, p. 9).

Regarding Student Impact – Many of the participants commented on the impact of "inclusion" on students. Teresa recognized the impact on social learning when she stated, "If they are taken out into a full-time, pull-out program … it is harder for them to socialize. The other kids don't even know them" (Interview with Teresa, p. 7). Janice suggested socialization, "is accomplished more within the regular program. They are more likely to hear about the draw that is taking place at lunch time and the plans for the dance and that sort of thing" (Interview with Janice, p. 5).

Comments such as *kids are more knowledgeable than most of us a lot of times; they learn so quickly, it's amazing; everyone has something to offer at some point in time; he adds to the class, he has an excellent sense of humour; it's not fair to her to be excluded; and students need more than anything to be included in something, part of the family of the classroom* all validated the importance of including students and recognized the positive impact for students. Kerri claimed, "Kids get a chance to practice being accepting and being tolerant and understanding that people come from different places. They become much more aware. This is one of the things I value most" (Interview with Kerri, p. 4).

There were other comments made by participants, however, which questioned the purpose of inclusion and its impact on students. For example: *you've got to be there for the regular students; some students get along exceedingly well in a pull-out; get them out; get them back on track; our regular kids have taken a really bad knock because of this; there is a constant unrest; he just isn't working here, etc.* In these scenarios, participants recognized that there were also negative outcomes for some students in some situations.

Regarding Decision Making – Interestingly, the participants who were advocates of inclusion suggested they felt supported by their administration. Marjorie asserted, "An entire staff approach is hugely important to where you are on the inclusive continuum [and] feeling supported is the most important thing" (Interview with Marjorie, p. 9). Patricia believed it was critical teachers feel "they have a voice [in] determining priorities, the placement of students, budget issues, assessments and so on" (Waxvine Interview, p. 22).

In the schools where educational decisions "were made by the administration," the participants tended to be less involved and consequently, felt unsupported. Barbara provided, "We are included to a certain extent, probably not as much as I would like. I'm not sure we are always consulted" (Interview with Barbara, p. 6).

Regarding Collaboration and Communication – The participants who supported the traditional special education model argued, "I find it to be a slight on my professionalism when they don't trust me to provide a program that I think suits that student" (Interview with Barbara, p. 8). Alison supported this perspective. "With teachers who have been around so long, that they are quite familiar with what needs to happen, they generally like to do their own thing. They can work informally with each other when they need to" (Interview with Alison, p. 7). For these participants, collaboration was an unnecessary process. As well, they appeared to resent the authorities telling them to do work collaboratively with their colleagues.

Those who supported inclusion claimed that the collaborative approach was critical. As a first year teacher Julia indicated, "If I didn't feel supported by my administrative staff, if I didn't feel like I was part of the team, I would not know where to begin. It's not mine to deal with alone" (Interview with Julia, p. 11). Marjorie talked extensively about the benefits of collaboration and mentioned, "If you have that kind of a staff then you really have nothing to be afraid of because...you have all the resources you need" (Interview with Marjorie, p. 10).

Whether they favoured inclusion or not, all of the participants indicated that clear communication was a critical component of, not only inclusive programs but of, all educational programs. Kerri's 13 years of teaching had shown her, "The one thing that I found is very important is...I keep everybody involved in the program. We talk every day on the phone, by e-mail ... every chance we get" (Interview with Kerri, p. 5). Patricia also realized, "The only way we were going to work really well together was to communicate together...so we've created grade level meetings" (Waxvine Interview, p. 13). Even in a traditional school, like Johnny Jump-up High School, communication was considered to be an critical component. "I think it is just established that it is really open and so they can come to me informally, at any time" (Interview with Teresa, p. 4).

Rick argued, unless "teachers buy into that type of program, it won't work." He explained when "teachers refuse to be a part of the collaborative culture, you have problems with continuity and communication" (Interview with Rick, p. 14).

Educational Policy

Miriam made it clear that there was more to understanding inclusion than understanding one's educational philosophy and preferred teaching methodology. She stated, "There are some legalities about what the law says is mainstreaming and the right for handicapped children to have an education just like anyone else's education"(Interview with Miriam, p. 19). She cited a court case where a severely handicapped child was granted placement in an advanced academic high school classroom because the parents "wanted him to have appropriate role models." Although this case may represent one extreme, it does represent the role of "law" in educational decision-making. Miriam concluded:

> Every school in the province is required to take their resident students however they come, whatever condition they come in. Now having said that, we also have, I believe, some legal rights to make program decisions in relation to children who themselves would not be successful in the regular classroom or would pose serious threat to the safety or education of children who are already in the program...so there is some precedent. (p. 19)

Generally, the participants claimed to know very little about the legalities of inclusion. The term, "legally," was used only in reference to Individual Program Plans (IPPs). For example, Patricia said, "legally, the IPPs should probably be signed, but I just don't have the time" (Waxvine Interview, p. 19). Principals had more knowledge than teachers about the legalities and policies of inclusion however, even Betty admitted, "I don't know what the legalities are ... " (Interview with Betty, p. 6).

Discussions about provincial policies proved to be no more informative. Again, the participants suggested they could not remember the "specifics" yet, provided examples which illustrated their "interpretation of the rules and regulations" (Waxvine Interview, p. 24). I commented, I had observed, that each school interpreted the rules and regulations somewhat differently. Allan responded, "That might be the case until they get caught. According to Alberta Learning, there is not an interpretation. It says the students must be coded and have current testing on file and that IPPs are required for all students taken out of the regular program of studies" (p. 24).

Patricia and Allan presented a vivid image about the politics surrounding inclusive policy in their school division. They described a scenario where the central office administrators "followed policy to the letter of the law" regarding the assessment and identification of students and suggested "they were fighting that one too." They believed the policies prevented the required "practical day to day" accommodations that enabled students to be successful (Waxvine Interview, p. 24).

> What's the difference if we give the kids another 30 minutes on a test that we've been doing ever since they've been in Grade 7 with us. Now they get to Grade 12 and we are going to say to them, "No. You can't have it." ... Which is the most important year for them to move on to some kind of post-secondary. That's crazy. (p. 25)

Both Allan and Patricia used phrases like *we wouldn't say this publicly; off the record* or *you're not taping this are you?* which emphasized their level of concern. At the end of this particular piece they regretfully added, "Sorry, we're giving you sour grapes now" (p. 25).

Interestingly, Patricia and Allan provided a perspective that was echoed by the other administrators in this study. Regarding the issue of provincial policy and the resulting funding structures, Miriam said, "Don't get me going. You're going to... hear some anger in this voice" (Interview with Miriam, p. 17). Betty claimed, "The block funding provides us with our special education program and our teacher aide time but it really amounts to nothing. Nothing!" (Interview with Betty, p. 11). Marjorie encouraged administrators to look for a "creative solution," if not a "subversive solution," for dealing with Alberta Learning's funding regulations (Interview with Marjorie, p. 20).

For the most part, the participants appeared to be clearer on their own school division policy. The Assistant Superintendent of Schools in the Paper Flower School Division provided an excellent description of their policy, as well as its underlying philosophical intent during the Paper Flower town hall meeting:

> ... the very first place we look for providing educational programs to students is in their neighbourhood school. And within that neighbourhood school, within a regular Grade 1 or Grade 2 or Grade 8 classroom, as the case might be. And I think that philosophical position is a strong one. I've heard it expressed by Board members, as they have had conversations, about the way we serve special needs students. And I've heard it reiterated in schools around the jurisdiction by people who say, "Yes, that's what we want to do." This is balanced by the feedback that I have heard from respondents who say, "Yeah, but!" ...meaning that indeed, we want to make sure that we look very carefully at the regular classroom setting being the first place that we serve students. But, we also may have students who won't respond, cannot respond and are not able to respond appropriately or to their advantage in a regular classroom setting. (Town Hall Meeting Interview, p. 6)

All of the selected school divisions provided similar policy statements. Although the participants recognized and valued these policy statements, they suggested "the policy is lived out by the actual day to day practice in schools" and therefore, the practice did not always reflect the mandated policy (Interview with Marjorie, p. 2). For example, Alison pointed out, "Though we say … that is the interpretation here … that's really not quite true either because we can't talk about IOP as a regular program and it's not talked about as special education even though we work it from a special education perspective" (Interview with Alison, p. 1). Marjorie also suggested that "just because a parent sees that it [inclusion] is possible and in some schools it is being done," it does not mean that principals should not be able to say, "for this reason or that reason, we feel that we would not be able to include … because of these circumstances, whatever they might be" (Interview with Marjorie, p. 2). For the most part, the school division policy was interpreted and acted upon at the administrative level.

Miriam described the impact of division level policy as it related to the school when she said, "The expectation is that teachers are responsible for the program of all the children in their classroom, including those of need, special need or high need" (Interview with Miriam, p. 13). Walter claimed, while this may be the expectation, "If the teacher doesn't want to or believes they don't have the skill or has an attitude that says, 'I pretty much want to teach to the mainstream,' trying to go with an integrated program isn't going to work" (Interview with Walter, p. 5). He believed, initially it was important to accept, "That's where the teachers are and that's the way they want to work. You move slowly from there" (p. 5). Marjorie described the interpretation of policy within her school:

> We are very case by case because you know what, every one of these teachers is a totally different person, coming from a different place. Some of them have huge flexibility in terms of whatever happens. Some of them are quite regimented… they want to know if this particular student will interfere with routines. (Interview with Miriam, p. 4)

Rick recognized the diversity within schools and suggested, "Especially in administration, it's got to be tough because how do you sell, how do you plan, how do you go about implementing inclusion?" (Interview with Rick, p. 12).

How is Inclusion Practiced?

From this starting point, the dialogue with participants was open-ended and thus, the responses were many and varied. The typological analysis revealed that, amidst the varied experiences and stories that were shared, the participants: a) described the roles of all of the involved stakeholders, b) identified four administrative decision-making models, c) described a variety of teaching practices, d) acknowledged the resulting issues pertaining to students, parents and the financial situation and e) addressed the real-life practical and logistical barriers to inclusion.

Role Descriptions

The Inclusive Administrator – According to Marjorie, the most important responsibility of the inclusive administrator was to be "a gate keeper in the sense that…this is the place where you get encouragement or discouragement of inclusion" (Interview with Marjorie, p. 1). For example, "If parents come through those doors and I say, 'I can't serve your child,' the only way they can go past that is if they were to go to the district office and say, 'we insist'" (p. 1). This finding was confirmed by the majority of participants who agreedthe administrator's philosophical viewpoint was of prime importance in setting the tone for an inclusive environment.

Marjorie also voiced the perception of the others when she stated, "Inclusion is highly dependent on the human resources in the building." She talked about the need to hire experienced, flexible, inclusive minded staff and stated:

> I think I've hired everyone in this building. I'm very careful when I hire people to say that I really want people who are extremely flexible across grade levels. I make it sound quite demanding in terms of the breadth of what is required and what they are willing to try. (Interview with Marjorie, p. 6)

Brad, the principal of Browallia Community School, claimed he had been building an inclusive community within his school for 15 years. Like Marjorie, he tended to lead by example through his lived action. He talked about the need to "encourage inclusion" and modeled inclusive teaching in his own classroom (Interview with Brad, p. 3).

Interestingly, almost all of the administrators believed it was important to teach, at a minimum, one class during the school year. Miriam suggested, "It gives us credibility" (Interview with Miriam, p. 17). Andrew stated, "It puts us in the trenches" (Interview with Andrew, p. 7). Patricia provided, "I know where the other teachers are coming from and it lets them know that I've been there too" (Waxvine Interview, p. 4).

Since the administrators were highly aware of their staff perception, they recognized that teacher support was a large part of their role. Marjorie offered, "I would provide whatever supports to help teachers get to a place where they can say yes to inclusion, but in the end it would be their call" (Interview with Marjorie, p. 2). She claimed she attempted to schedule the "jammiest job in the world" for all of her staff. In the scenarios where this was not possible, she said, "then I would figure out all the possible supports and perks…that I could give someone to make that more acceptable to them but always they would have to, in the end, agree" (p. 7).

Miriam suggested acknowledging a teacher's philosophical and preferred methodological position was, in and of itself, considered a support. She claimed, "As administrators, we are in a position where we need to know. Teachers voice their concerns…and their needs along the way and we try to plug those holes as best we can" (Interview with Miriam, p. 9). The administrators indicated they attempted to find ways to provide *extra planning time, additional teaching assistance, flexibility in timetables, adequate resources and supports* and *professional development opportunities*.

Even so, they recognized that frequently "their hands were tied" by government legislation or inadequate funding and in many cases, "made extreme sacrifices" and "took great efforts to support" their teachers (Interview with Candice, p. 2). Miriam described one situation where she redistributed the counsellor/special education coordinator's time (who was away on maternity leave) to provide an additional 0.62 teaching assistant for a needy Grade 5 classroom. She had taken on the coordination of the special education and had attempted to "pick up the counsellor's duties." The result, she said, was "You just do a bad job of everything" (Interview with Miriam, p. 12).

Building an inclusive school community and culture often required administrators to go beyond traditional boundaries. They talked about the need to be *visible, accessible, approachable* and *involved.* Allan claimed that he attended all student meetings and looked after the follow-up, consequences and outcomes. He provided an example which illustrated his depth of commitment and relationship with students.

> Just this morning I walked in and a student said to me, "Mr. Principal. Are you seeing me? Watch what I am doing." You know, this is a kid we just had a meeting about last week that hasn't turned in his stuff to me yet, in fact it was just yesterday. And so he goes, "Are you watching me? See these are things I said I was going to be doing? Notice I'm doing them?" And so you know, even when I walk in the room, they want me to see that they are doing what they are supposed to be doing. (Waxvine Interview, p. 16)

Marjorie suggested that an inclusive school culture was also fostered through discipline based on the notion of mutual respect.

> We're pretty fierce about any kind of harassment and we realized that when we first started modifying programs that we were going to have to be very, very, very committed to the business of 'everyone treated with dignity' and to the punishments and giving of consequences. (Interview with Marjorie, p. 14)

As a staff, they had agreed to make a "concerted effort" and in a very short time, Marjorie remarked, "When the kids know you mean business, then they quit" (p. 16). Patricia and Allan identified a scenario where their discipline and support alleviated a problem where "a few kids in Grades 7 and 8" were harassing a teaching assistant. They indicated,"it's a respect issue" and made it clear that teaching assistants deserved the same respect and status as all other staff in their school (Waxvine Interview, p. 16).

The majority of participants indicated that inclusive administrators took strategic steps to involve parents and the community in the greater school community. At Waxvine Secondary, Allan and Patricia suggested that *parents are given an opportunity to be involved; they are provided with choices and the communication is clear and two-way.* Patricia observed, "We don't have irate parents coming in and saying...nobody tells me what is going on" (Waxvine Interview, p. 15). Marjorie, Walter and Brad commented on the benefit of building an extended inclusive community and suggested they were *able to recruit coaches, specialists for presentations and parent volunteers for the school and for* *classrooms*. The administrators of both Waxvine Secondary and Johnny Jump-up High School sought out a number of outside agencies and recommended that their involvement "improved the transition to adult life for many special needs students" (Waxvine Interview, p. 6).

Marjorie cautioned that the inclusive administrator must balance this involvement for the benefit of all involved. She added "It's a hugely important role ... the mediation between parents and teachers, to try and protect them [the teachers] so that they can do the job they need to do" (Interview with Marjorie, p. 9). One of the stories she shared portrayed this scenario:

> I had one parent who wanted to sit in on all classes, day in and day out, and the teacher was just totally freaked out by that. So I said, "You tell me what you think is reasonable and what you think is fair" and then, you do the best that you can to do something to alleviate her anxieties and at the same time, "I will make sure that you are not being taken advantage of." (p. 8)

Marjorie felt it was in her role to say to parents, "I am the advocate for the other 28 kids in that class and although I feel that we must do the best that we can for your child, try to keep in mind some kind of notion of the balance here" (p. 12). Regarding the role of mediator, Miriam described the pressure she experienced from a "very settled long-time community which makes certain demands and expectations for behaviour and academic performance" (Interview with Miriam, p. 4). According to Alison, "It's an ongoing balancing act between the rights of the individual and the rights of group" (p. 12).

The data suggested that the inclusive administrator also made attempts to limit class size so that teachers could personalize instruction and provide appropriate support. Walter involved his staff in the decision to reallocate "the special education time that might have been available and used it to create additional classrooms." He warned, "So all of a sudden the class sizes went from 28 to 20, but the teachers now have increased responsibility" (Interview with Walter, p. 4). While a few administrators found creative ways to provide smaller classes, the majority felt they were limited by inadequate funding and, in some cases, believed that the available money was best spent on traditional special education services.

In addition to the responsibilities mentioned thus far, the most inclusive minded administrators tended to merge the special education and regular streams through a collaborative approach. Marjorie described this process and its underlying philosophical foundation:

> You don't come to work in a role. You come to work as the whole person that you are and therefore, with all of the skills and all of the understandings and feelings you have as a human being. If you come in that way, if you come to a building as a group of 30 people who are going to insist these 300 kids do whatever ... hen you have all the resources you need. When you come to the building in a role, then there are all kinds of gaps and all kinds of places where we don't have the person or we don't have the money or we don't have the whatever, you know? But, I mean, when the librarian is bringing hair gel to school for this kid and getting him to wash his hair. She says, "You know what? I will buy you some of that gel but you have to put it on clean hair. It just doesn't work if you put it on dirty hair. So you wash that hair and then come and see me." So the next thing you know, he's going around with this gelled hair and we couldn't get him to do it before that. So, who's role is that? (Interview with Marjorie, p. 10)

In Marjorie's school, there appeared to be no distinction between the special education or regular teacher, teacher assistant or librarian; the entire staff worked together to facilitate the inclusive environment.

Even in the schools where the dual-track system existed, but the administrators believed in the values of inclusion, they recognized the importance of fostering an inclusive environment (i.e., they encouraged *collaborative planning, team teaching and open communication*). Allan said, "Wherever they are, whatever they are doing ... they all have the same power ... they network all of the time ... and communication is critical to our success" (Waxvine Interview, p. 16).

In order to create this kind of environment, the inclusive administrators participated as members of collaborative problem-solving teams that invented solutions from the ground up. Walter described the team in his school and suggested "it goes beyond the support that one would usually think of." His team was one of three that met weekly and worked collaboratively to "find solutions, ... come up with ideas" and provide practical suggestions

(Interview with Walter, p. 8). In the more traditional schools, an administrative team member tended to head up a less formal system of communication and support for staff. Alison suggested "they do a lot of it, sort of informally, over a noon hour or as they need to do it" (Interview with Alison, p. 7). Although this kind of support structure was mandated through policy in all of the involved school divisions, the manifestation of school support teams varied greatly from school to school, even within the same school division.

Finally, most of the administrators talked about *the need to be really involved*. In all but one school, the administrators believed it was their responsibility to *coordinate services, budget creatively, involve all staff in decision-making, empower staff, provide flexibility* and so on. Marjorie suggested, "You cannot embark on this kind of a thing with a really narrow mentality about budget or about people just having to cope or whatever" (Interview with Marjorie, p. 8). Allan and Walter both said, "You sit down with staff and say, 'Here is what we have. What are our priorities? What do you think we should do with staffing? If we hire this many staff, we will have this much money for other things ... '" and so on (Waxvine Interview, p. 22; Interview with Walter, p. 13). Marjorie stressed, "I would involve the whole staff in that decision-making process because maybe everyone will be impacted by the needs of that child" (Interview with Marjorie, p. 3). Kerri commented, "In the long run, it would be the principal who would be ultimately responsible for ensuring that all of that happens" (Interview with Kerri, p. 7).

The Special Educator or Coordinator – Data regarding the role of the special educator or coordinator might be considered irrelevant in a discussion about inclusion since second-generation inclusion calls for the merger of regular and special education. Nevertheless, an understanding of the responsibilities associated with this position was of value since, even when the responsibilities were redistributed, it was critical that someone take on the responsibilities traditionally associated with this role.

Interestingly, the school's philosophical orientation was not a factor in the role of the special education personnel. Whether the school's focus tended to be traditional or leaned toward the more inclusive, this role description was defined in a similar manner. One of the primary responsibilities was the coordination of support services within the school. In some cases, this responsibility was assumed by the administrators and in others, it had been reassigned to a school support team. In any event, the participants talked about the need for someone to coordinate the teaching assistants, the outside support services, as well as to facilitate the communication process between the involved parties. Miriam termed this process, "case management" (Interview with Miriam, p. 28)

The first coordination effort that was identified was the ***hiring, training, supervising, scheduling organizing*** and ***assisting of teaching assistants***. Miriam provided an example which illustrated this point.

> I get to choose what kind of teaching assistant time I have. I get direction from our Director of Special Services about what kinds of issues live in my school and therefore, what kinds of teaching assistant needs there are in my school, but it is ultimately up to me to make sure that the needs of those children are being met (Interview with Miriam, p. 5)

In some cases, the teaching assistant time was assigned to a specific teacher or classroom, in others the time was directly attached to a specific student. For example, Kerri and Julia described how their educational assistant, who had been hired specifically to support one severe behaviour student, worked collaboratively with all three Grade 6 teachers to serve the needs of all students. In Alison's case, she suggested, "When that funding comes through, we put an aide there. For the most part they are really close to kids. They follow them wherever they go" (Interview with Alison, p. 2).

Despite the method for assigning assistants to classrooms, Janice had discovered that some teachers needed support with this process, (i.e., they needed to learn how to work with teaching assistants) and "were ... looking for specific suggestions about ... how can I use them? What are their roles? What can I ask of them ... and what should I be hanging onto myself" (Interview with Janice, p. 7). As a result, the special education coordinator or designate was often responsible for teacher training in this area.

Special education coordinators or their designates were also responsible for the coordination of all additional support services (e.g., physiotherapy, speech therapy, occupational therapy and psychologists). Although the school divisions provided some of these supports through their central offices (e.g., *Director of Student Services, Director of Special Services, Director of Special Education* or *the District Psychologist*) generally, they had to contract these services through outside private agencies such as Capital Health or their Regional Health Authority.

The participants also found it beneficial for someone to be in charge of the communication with the outside agencies (e.g., *local hospital, Glenrose, Child Welfare Services, Parole Officers, the Sheltered Workshop, etc.*), "whenever the need presented itself" (Waxvine Interview, p. 6). Miriam suggested, "There needs to be a more aggressive case management approach with all of the agencies working together to provide for the needs of these children." She believed inclusion "works when all of those agencies are in place and in power to do what it is they need to do" (Interview with Miriam, p. 28).

In many cases, the special education coordinator was responsible for facilitating a school based support team that provided teachers with assistance with *teaching strategies, IPP development, program modifications and accommodations, communication with parents and so on.* Although most of the school districts mandated this type of support structure, the data revealed that school support teams were only operating successfully in about half of the participating schools. The success of the team depended on the *attitude of the involved personnel, the amount of personal time required, the knowledge and skill of the participants, the effect of the follow-up action and interaction* and *the degree to which participants deemed this kind of support to be important.* At one school, the counsellor described the difficulty they had in providing a support team.

> We would probably be needing to be hauled in by our ears on that one, because… it's suggested there should be [meetings] and they would like copies of our monthly minutes however, time and the extensive needs of some of our students … [have] sort of overridden our ability there, to plan. The issues need dealing with now. (Interview with Janice, p. 6)

The participants from Waxvine Secondary School talked extensively about their "strategies oriented" meetings that involved parents, teachers, students and administrators. Patricia commented, "they've been a saving grace because … everyone knows exactly what is going on. We're all on the same page" (Waxvine Interview, p. 13).

Given that clear communication was central to the effectiveness of these coordination efforts, this was another facet of the special education coordinator's role. Typically, in the more traditional schools, communication was conducted through formal channels and therefore, the ongoing daily communication among all stakeholders was not a high priority. For example, Miriam suggested communication of information tended to happen "a couple of times annually" (Interview with Miriam, p. 9). Janice indicated that communication happened on "a case by case basis … as it comes up" (Interview with Janice, p. 5). She provided an example to illustrate this problem:

> We haven't, as a group, had a chance to sit down and say, "so can we put everybody's head together here and are we going in a good direction here?" We've done that as administrators and with our special education teacher and with our central office's help and our outside consultant's help, but in terms of the other teachers that are involved in our special education team – no, we haven't done that. (Interview with Janice, p. 7)

Betty communicated with her staff through "the network. If I'm updating or adding any new data that comes in from outside (e.g., psychologists, support services like the Glenrose or the Misericordia), I update the data and the teacher can access that information on-line" (Interview with Betty, p. 4).

The communication system in Waxvine Secondary School was clearly established through the joint efforts of the administration who had created a visible chain of command, distinct role descriptions and a process whereby teachers were a part of monthly meetings with parents and students. The exchange of information and ideas from teachers, parents and students all passed through the special education coordinator who claimed, "This way everyone knows what's going on and there are no surprises" (Waxvine Interview, p. 15).

The communication system in inclusive schools was less formal, yet was considered a higher priority. For instance, Brad explained that within his school there was a tremendous amount of ongoing communication between all staff in the form of "e-mails, weekly meetings, planning sessions, phone calls home and so on" (Interview with Brad, p. 2). In this example, Brad took it upon himself to empower the staff and encourage a variety of communication methods rather than control the kinds of communication within the school.

The special education coordinator or designate was also primarily responsible for communicating with parents. Betty indicated, "Before I fill out any referral forms going out to the district for psychologist intervention of any type, I call the parent and ask if I can do some achievement testing" (Interview with Betty, p. 15). From there, she involved parents in the communication regarding the assessment results, identification and coding of the student, placement issues, IPP development and so on. In inclusive schools, many of these details were coordinated by the classroom teacher.

Furthermore, the special education coordinator was responsible for providing a number of critical in-school supports. Betty claimed, "I'm coordinating. I'm advising. I'm providing materials. I'm doing the achievement testing. I do the IPPs and all of that good stuff" (Interview with Betty, p. 2). Patricia described the "process of identifying" students based on the "criterion for special education funding" (Waxvine Interview, p. 10). "These students have all of the psyche. assessments that have labelled them, code whatever [so] when Alberta Learning sends someone … to do your severe grant funding, you have all your paperwork in place" (p. 23). In schools where the special education position had been disbanded, this responsibility often became part of the school counsellor's role description or, in some cases, was added to the assistant principal's or principal's work load.

Miriam indicated, "Based on Alberta Learning's regulations on assessment and the identification of students, IPPs are required for anyone who is being accommodated in a differentiated program of any kind" (Interview with Miriam, p. 13). The most traditional schools expected the special education coordinator to create and write all of the IPPs. For Patricia, this meant she was responsible for writing and monitoring 96 IPPs which she claimed was a "formidable task" (Waxvine Interview, p. 17). As a first year teacher, Teresa found the process of writing 60 IPPs to be, "a little overwhelming ... because in a lot of cases, I don't even know the kids" (Interview with Teresa, p. 8). In the more inclusive schools, "classroom teachers were ultimately responsible for the writing, delivery and maintenance of the IPP" and in most cases, were supported by their *special needs coordinator, an administrator or their school support team* (Interview with Miriam, p. 13).

The special education coordinator was also expected to provide teachers with *all kinds of classroom strategies and supports; different modifications you would make or accommodations you could provide; materials and resources are a must* (Interview with Betty, p. 6). Betty worked hard to obtain materials and resources for her staff. Occasionally she was able to find resources that were a "tremendous benefit ... lots of strategies...and really simple ways for making modifications" (p. 6). At other times she claimed, "You just can't get it. If I have problems, I just call district office, the book depository...but sometimes the things have been dispersed or are not published anymore" (p. 15). Betty observed, "Teachers sometimes think these things have to be so gigantic and huge and get caught up in all of that and almost defeat themselves before they begin" (p. 6). In schools where the coordinator's role had been absorbed, teachers frequently worked together with their team (e.g., teaching assistants and other colleagues) to "determine the modifications or accommodations needed to carry out all of that" (Interview with Julia, p. 5). Rick voiced the concern of many when he said it was difficult to find the time to locate, evaluate and modify resources for his classroom.

Finally, the special education coordinator's job involved encouraging staff to use a variety of teaching methods (e.g., differentiated instruction, collaborative or team teaching, small group and large group instruction). For the most part, they "had a hard sell" in the more traditional schools because as Barbara attested, "I really don't alter my delivery a whole lot other than I am aware that they are there and then I can take that into consideration when I am marking the lot" (Interview with Barbara, p. 2). Miriam commented, "Most teachers don't want to go into differentiating program because of the extra work involved" (p. 16).

The Inclusive Classroom Teacher – Many of the roles and responsibilities of the traditional special education coordinator have been downloaded onto the classroom teacher. For those with an inclusive mindset this has not presented a problem. For those with a more traditional mindset however, this has resulted in a major imposition and has been the source of much stress.

According to the data, the inclusive teacher fostered a learning community where all students were seen as valuable citizens who had a right to learn and to contribute to the learning community. Kerri and Julia talked about the need to teach kids to be "cognizant of the choices we make and the spaces that we make and allow people to be in" (Interview with Kerri, p. 4). A large part of their classroom instruction focused on the day to day acts of being a valuable citizen. "We've had lots of discussions because one student's disabilities are not noticeable on the outside so we've talked about being wired differently on the inside and they seem to respond to that" (Interview with Julia, p. 5).

The traditional teachers were more likely to say, "They don't belong here. We've got to get them out of the classroom" (Interview with Rick, p. 12). These teachers commented on the fact that the students *can't handle the material; cause too many disruptions; would do better in an IOP class or a segregated setting* and so on. Barbara provided, "I had two of the behavioural type fellows who just really didn't want to be here so they were pulling apart the program. Once those two were gone, it really made a difference (Interview with Barbara, p. 12).

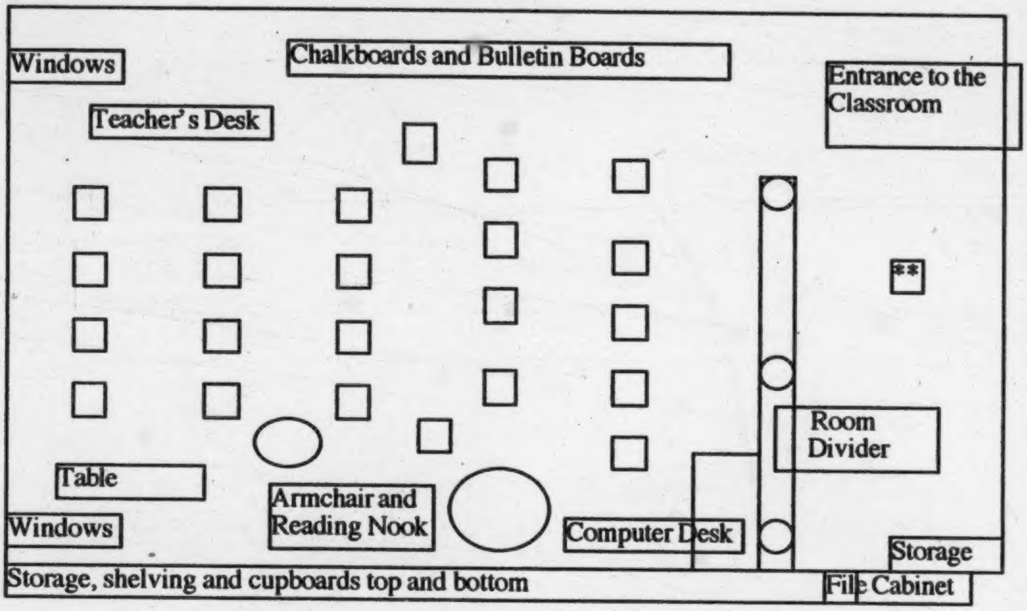
Inclusive teachers created a classroom climate that assumed peer support. Andrew described how, in his classroom, he and the teaching assistant expected all of the students to take part in the science demonstrations, to assist one another with projects and group work and claimed the result was "an interactive and supportive classroom climate." He said, "You know what guys? This student is going to need some help on this one. Who thinks they can help?" Andrew justified this position by suggesting that all students needed assistance at certain points and that by sharing this support around, "no one feels that they are always doing the hard work and no one feels that they are always the one getting help" (Interview with Andrew, p. 8). Kerri, Julia and Rick also talked about the need to *encourage peer support* within their classrooms. Marjorie described a peer tutoring project which encouraged junior high students to support younger students within her school.

In some of the traditional classrooms, it was obvious that special needs students were left to cope as best they could while the teacher attended to the needs of the majority. Barbara commented, "I don't think that sitting in a class of 24 other kids, struggling, working and being frustrated that they are getting anything and I guess my concern is also for the regular kids. I think our regular kids have taken a really bad knock because of this" (Interview with Barbara, p. 11).

An observation in Celosia Community School vividly depicted the fact that a student can be physically present and not be included. The asterisk denotes the physically segregated, hypothetically included student. In this case, the classroom had a bookshelf divider that became a physical barrier between the identified special needs student and the rest of the classroom. The teacher commented that the students could not cope with this child's disruptions – see Figure 1.0 (Celosia Observation 1, p. 2).

The inclusive teacher also made attempts to help all students develop their intellectual and creative potentials. "I don't care where they are. You can take them from here and you can send them … if you believe in them enough…" claimed Rick (Interview with Rick, p. 17). Regarding one student's progress on a genre project in language arts, Rick said, "I mean, she's low IQ and having said that, she can still function and it's proven that she can. And the pride that she's taking in her work. I bet you she must have shown it to me four times today" (Interview with Rick, p. 14). Kerri claimed, "I recognize individual kids that are being really helpful, very good role models in the class and … we talk about what they are doing" (Interview with Kerri, p. 5).

Figure 1.0


Windows
Chalkboards and Bulletin Boards
Entrance to the Classroom
Teacher's Desk
**
Room Divider
Table
Armchair and Reading Nook
Windows
Computer Desk
Storage
Storage, shelving and cupboards top and bottom
File Cabinet

Many of the participants believed it was important to recognize their students' efforts and achievements. Kerri suggested that for one of her students, "being in the classroom was a major goal. We are starting to meet that goal, not necessarily every day but, he is getting better and better so we let him know he's doing great" (Interview with Kerri, p. 9). Walter commented that in a number of cases the progress was very minimal and difficult to measure, yet believed, "even the tiniest baby steps need to be celebrated" (Interview with Walter, p. 26). Barbara also recognized the positive progress of one of her IOP students when she said, "He's focusing on the program ... succeeding in the program. He's starting to feel good about himself. And so you look at all of that and say now, 'is he at school everyday? Well, that's a step in the right direction'" (Interview with Barbara, p. 12).

Sharing student success was also identified as a necessity for the inclusive classroom teacher because it helped to boost the image of inclusion. Rick stated, "We brag about her lots, you know… so that maybe the staff will have the opportunity to see the value of her being included" (Interview with Rick, p. 12). Marjorie described a scenario where even the junior high students teaching elementary students to read, were recognizing achievement. "The teaching assistants would call me down and say, 'You have to come and see this.' You know, I'd watch the kids and the kids would be saying, 'Good for you. Awesome!'" (Interview with Marjorie, p. 17). Regarding another student she commented, "Of course it's just been wonderful what has happened with him. I wish I would have had a video with this kid, he's changed so much" (p. 10).

Since inclusive teachers recognized the value of inclusion, they also seemed to intuitively recognize the value of using a variety of instructional strategies and assessments within the classroom. An example from an observation of Rick's classroom revealed that four different activities were happening simultaneously.

> The teaching assistant has taken one group to the side of the room and has the students exchange sheets for marking. The teacher takes a second group to sit in a circle on the floor. A student with severe needs has begun to work on her poster project independently at a carrel at the back of the classroom. Another student has removed himself from the first group to work independently in a carrel in the front corner of the room. With all these things going on, it doesn't seem to bother anybody. They are pretty much attending to what is going on. (Candytuft Observation, p. 5)

Inclusive teachers were also much more likely to see the curriculum as being interdisciplinary and as a result, were more likely to bridge learning in the classroom with the real world. A case in point was the Vincent Project created by the staff of Dusty Miller Community School. These teachers created and were able to obtain grant money for, a specific "hands-on, real life" special project for a bright student with a severe learning disability (Interview with Andrew, p. 16). For Walter, the concept of inclusion extended beyond the school to the greater community. He described a situation where two young deaf boys were learning American Sign language in their colony school. Walter claimed, even though they did not have the money to support it,

> We felt an obligation to help the community, so that when these young men got out of school, they would be able to communicate with somebody in their community. You know in a colony you don't go anywhere else. That's where you live for the rest of your life. So we taught evening classes to adults. (Interview with Walter, p. 17)

Community and parental involvement appeared to be a natural extension for the inclusive teacher. At the middle school level this generally referred to the active participation of parents in the *assessment and identification of students, IPP development and the ongoing progress reporting process, coaching, providing in-class assistance* and so on. Communication through meetings, phone calls, communication books and e-mails were a few of the identified methods used by inclusive teachers.

Rick described one case which required not only a tremendous amount of ongoing communication and outside assistance, but support for the family as well.

> He's a fetal alcohol child with a foster family on the reserve and they're good people and they're working hard. But a year and a half ago, they had almost had enough. This year we've had probably four or five interviews, other than the regular scheduled interviews, just to sort of see where we're going, getting back on track, because we were having a problem. We have agendas. Now with this fellow, I write in his because there is just no way he can do it. I was having a problem with the fact that nothing was coming back. So we needed the native liaison worker, working with this student and the family and now, something different has happened. (Interview with Rick, p. 5)

One inclusive administrator commented "communication is a critical factor in the success of inclusive programs for teachers" (Patricia in the Waxvine Interview, p. 14).

Inclusion required a collaborative approach since, in many ways, much more was expected of the classroom teacher. For example, many of the inclusive teachers commented they felt it necessary to "keep everybody involved in the program" meaning, the teaching assistants, other involved colleagues, therapists, parents and so on (Interview with Kerri, p. 5). Julia and Kerri met on a weekly basis.

> Usually Monday nights, all of the three Grade 6 teachers meet together, and so after we have finished planning for the week, we talk to the TA and say, "This is our schedule and these are the projects we are going to be working on and this student will be doing this and this student will be..." We make a schedule for the TA; certain periods are blocked out for her, like the certain times she has to see certain kids but we also leave quite a bit of her schedule open and we block that together on a weekly basis. (Interview with Kerri, p. 6)

Julia added that teaming allowed them to *draw on their strengths, spell one another off and to reach a greater variety of students* (Interview with Julia, p. 8). Andrew viewed the colleagues in his building as "an incredible asset ... available to everybody" and suggested, he consulted with them on a regular basis (Interview with Andrew, p. 9). "If I'm really worried about something or the students are not getting it, I say to the TA, 'watch the class and I'll run down the hall.'" (p. 10). Andrew claimed, "The result is a collegial and supportive staff [because] almost everyone feels comfortable, sharing and working together" (p. 9).

The Teaching Assistant – Every school that participated in this study employed personnel who provided support or assistance to the teachers, the special needs students and the regular program students within the building. An interesting finding was there appeared to be no standard or consistency in the term used to identify the persons in this role. Most commonly participants used the title *TA or teaching assistant* to identify their support personnel though in a few cases TA referred to, the more dated title, *teacher's aide*. One participant suggested her staff had elected to use the term *educational assistant or EA*. As well, the term *classroom assistant* was used upon occasion. Furthermore, the titles used for describing this support role were used interchangeably. For the purpose of this research, the term *teaching assistant* was used to identify this supporting role.

According to Alison, teaching assistants were most often hired as a result of special education funding and therefore were assigned to support one or more identified and funded special needs students (Interview with Alison, p. 2). In practice, the teaching assistants were responsible for much more than the one or two students they were assigned. As well, the teaching assistant's role was often determined by the classroom teacher as a result, was based on each teacher's personal style (Interview with Janice, p. 11). Nevertheless, it was suggested that teaching assistants supported special needs students by ***helping them with note-taking, providing them with typed notes, scribing their ideas when needed, supporting their reading*** and so on. Rick explained how his TAs had created an organizational system to "help students manage their materials. Any other way, all those materials would have been lost in the fog" (Interview with Rick, p. 9).

In a more general sense, teaching assistants supported all students in the classroom in that they *encouraged student participation, effort and independence* and *reinforced appropriate behaviour* throughout. Allan claimed, "In most cases the TAs know kids better than the teacher does" (Waxvine Interview, p. 17) Barbara said, "generally, they have a good rapport with the students" (Interview with Barbara, p.13).

Teaching assistants also supported teachers by *providing instruction and support to students in individualized, small-group* and *large-group situations*. Like Candice, many of the participants described a scenario where the TA:

> Takes one student out for a separate spelling program; it is a pull-out situation. She also takes small groups for reading. She is here at the end of the day to help with homework organization because I have ten agenda books to fill out. I have involved her in as much core as possible. (Interview with Candice, p. 2)

As was mentioned previously, TAs were frequently required to deliver programs to severe students in segregated settings. Miriam remarked, "and look at the children we are giving to our teacher aides; our neediest" (Interview with Miriam, p. 17). Barbara emphasized, "It's a big job...because TAs work with a number of teachers" and therefore, they are held accountable for the communication with teachers (Interview with Barbara, p. 5). Andrew elaborated upon this and explained that because the core subjects were often divided between four or more teachers, the "TA becomes the constant in the equation" (Interview with Andrew, p. 6).

The statements *we make our lesson plans together, she is my organizer, does the photocopying, makes sure the tests are ready, demonstrates the experiment, etc.* provided evidence to suggest that teaching assistants were involved throughout the teaching process. Rick described the TA's required level of comfort and responsibility. "A normal kid had a big meltdown this morning ... while I'm dealing with that, the TA just carries on" (Interview with Rick, p. 9). Andrew defined the distinction between excellent and exceptional when it came to teaching assistants. "This teaching assistant often works over her noon hour. She does some after hours too. She is so incredibly organized" (Interview with Andrew, p. 9).

Teaching assistants were also expected to be involved in the overall discipline process.

> She [the TA] handles the discipline every bit as much as I do. It has to be that way. What is the job of the TA? To run the classroom. She shouldn't have to come and bang on my door and say, 'Oh, I need some help. They were not listening to me." I don't want a TA who doesn't have the command presence to say, "This is the rule, you know the rule and then follow through with the rule." (Interview with Andrew, p. 9)

Allan and Patricia claimed teaching assistants should have the same "power and authority as teachers" in terms of discipline within the building (Waxvine Interview, p. 16).

Andrew also introduced the need for teachers to recognize the resource in their teaching assistants. He described how he had encouraged his TAs to "share their talents wherever and whenever possible" (Interview with Andrew, p. 9). Marjorie emphasized the importance of TA training and suggested they had a great deal to share.

> They do sessions on autism, ADHD, non-violent crisis intervention, first aid, animated literacy, reluctant learners, something on native or some things that reflect personal goals. Teaching assistants might have something that someone else wouldn't have. (Interview with Marjorie, p. 5)

For the most part, the participants claimed teaching assistants were *an indispensable asset; are independent; really responsible; extremely capable; and are self-directed.* Kerri stated, "Our EA usually sees what needs to be done and does it" (Interview with Kerri, p. 7). Rick admitted, "I couldn't do this without them. There's no way I could. There is no question, they are an integral part of my program" (Interview with Rick, p. 9).

Administrative Decision Making Models

Examination of the various perspectives on administration revealed four different administrative decision-making models: a) a top-down model, b) a top-down model with bottom up involvement, c) a collaborative model and d) a learning community model.

Interestingly, the schools that appeared to be the most traditional, in that they favoured the dual-track system of delivery, had administrators who believed it was *ultimately their responsibility to determine how services should be delivered, how to place students, how the dollars should be spent and what supports should be provided.* These administrators utilized the traditional top-down model of educational decision-making. To illustrate, when asked who would be responsible for the educational decision-making in the school, the teachers generally replied, ***That would be the administrators.*** Alison admitted, "I guess formally, we don't involve staff. When the crunch comes down, we have to decide...sorry, we can't offer Math 31. We really struggled with letting go of the band program, for example" (Interview with Alison, p. 5).

The focus in these cases was on curriculum and programs and not on student programming. In top-down schools, decisions regarding student placement were frequently based on "where you can provide for that student; not always on what is in the best interest of that student" (Interview with Janice, p. 3). As well, these administrators tended to develop levelled program options that favoured homogeneous groupings (Interview with Alison, p. 1). Betty suggested that the teachers in her school "accept that they don't have any options there. They get who they get and everyone agrees" (Interview with Betty, p. 13).

A critical distinction between the top-down decision-making model in Johnny Jump-up High School and the model practiced in Lady Slipper Community School and Waxvine Secondary was that the latter two administrators supported inclusion philosophically. They, therefore, felt it was necessary to involve the staff in the decision-making process, at least to some degree. This kind of model was named the top-down model with bottom-up involvement.

The staff involvement in the Lady Slipper Community School was limited to meetings "a couple of times annually" to identify "needs in the classrooms" as well as methods for "meeting those needs" (Interview with Miriam, p. 9). Miriam said, "I work in very close consultation with the special education coordinator when it comes to decisions regarding special education and the placement of students." She indicated she felt ultimately responsible, "because there are dollars connected to decisions and because I am the one who is responsible for distributing those dollars." Even though the school division offered several segregated special education programs, some of which were offered in Lady Slipper School, Miriam encouraged inclusion on a case by case basis in classrooms where it could be supported and for students for whom it would be successful. As a result, there were pockets of inclusion operating within Lady Slipper School.

While Patricia and Allan favoured considerably more staff involvement, they both agreed they needed to retain some control of the decision-making process. Allan indicated, that in his school, many of the decisions were made by committees of elected staff members. From Allan's perspective, he felt it was important to:

> Sit down together and say, "Okay ... What are our priorities?" The staff have a voice in a lot of things and that's the way that things work well. Now with regards to student placement, they meet and if something twigs... then I'm called in right away and we check things out and we decide where we are going to place this kid. (Waxvine Interview, p. 22)

Their need for control was limited not only to the decision-making process. Patricia and Allan both believed, that with respect to their specific community, full inclusion was not an appropriate course of action. Thus, they had created a flexible continuum of programming options that provided for inclusion at one end of the spectrum. Their model was based on a clear system of role responsibilities and boasted a remarkable communication system. The Grade 8 social studies teacher commented, "There are very clear (high) expectations for where teachers and students should be at all times" (Waxvine Observation, p. 6).

Walter, principal of Candytuft Community School, struggled to create an inclusive context using a collaborative model within a staff that adhered to a variety of philosophical perspectives. At the outset he encouraged his staff to collaborate and to take control of the decision-making process. Walter told his staff, "Here are the resources that I have available. You now have identified the needs in your classroom. Go decide how to make it work." He was surprised to find that for most of the staff, "the choice is that the special needs kids leave" (Interview with Walter, p. 13). With regret, Walter added, "There was not a question in my mind. They made the decision." (p. 24). Despite this situation, Walter continued to support and encourage those who had opted for inclusion with the hopes that they might "lead the way" (p. 5).

Brad, principal of Browallia Community School, used the collaborative model with much success. He claimed, "I involve all of the key people and sometimes the whole staff." In his case, the staff believed in inclusive philosophy and utilized inclusive practices. Brad recognized that his approach was "very demanding of staff" (Interview with Brad, p. 3) His staff was expected to meet as a whole group together, and within their divisional groups, at minimum once weekly. As well, Brad expected a great deal of communication, sharing between colleagues, cross-over between subject areas and a willingness to provide differentiated instruction.

Kerri provided an example that highlighted the importance of administrative support to the collaborative process:

> The administrative support is vital. The principal comes down and talks to each of us and you know, our feelings about whether we can provide for this student's needs. He took into account our particular situation... that we already had a needy student in our class and the fact that this addition would not necessarily be good for [the needy student] and not necessarily good for [the new student]. (Interview with Kerri, p. 8)

In the end, the administrator and all three Grade 6 teachers decided, collaboratively, that the most appropriate placement for the new students would be in the second Grade 6 classroom.

Marjorie took the collaborative model one step further and created a learning community model. Philosophically, Marjorie believed that inclusion encompassed the entire learning community and therefore the staff, students and community members within it. She approached administrative decision-making from a slightly different "place" because she expected everyone involved to be open to all possibilities. Marjorie provided an insightful description of the outcome of this kind of shared decision-making.

> You know what happens here over time, ... people become willing to do more and more than their own narrow little place where they started from. They say, "You know what, at first I wasn't too keen about this but you know, you can put me on it if you need to." So after a while, people broaden their scope of what they are willing to try and then it makes it so easy because then you are never in a spot

> where nobody will take whatever it is. I got a note from one teacher about two weeks ago who was one of the most inflexible people in the building, when I came, in the world I would have said. I got this letter saying, "You talked to me a little bit about changing assignments next year and you know, I think I would be willing to go there. I think I might need some help and when it comes right down to it, I know that I didn't say this to you before and you are anxious to try and give me what I want here, but I might actually not mind staying where I am now because I am really starting to do some good things at this grade level." So I got this letter from this teacher and I just said, "Whoa – isn't that grand!" I mean she has given me all kinds of scope and even staying is absolutely what she did not want to do before. So that is pretty neat. And you know, I think that is where the give and take is. If people are involved in the decision-making and if they feel that you are honouring that everywhere you can, then they will go the distance for you when you say, "Guys, I'm really sorry but I cannot do anything about this one and what about this? And if you can figure out a way, then tell me and we'll do it." (Interview with Marjorie, pp. 7 – 8)

For Marjorie, administrative decision-making was a "give and take" process where all of the involved stakeholders discussed, collaborated and made decisions together; sometimes with compromise, but always in the best interest of all involved.

Teaching Practice

For all of the participants defining inclusion, independent of their teaching practice, was a difficult task. Generally, the participants used examples to illustrate a continuum of accepted "inclusive" teaching practice. Walter described "the ideal" and suggested that all children should be given the help they need, whether it be extra resources, modification of programs or one on one assistance, within the regular classroom" (Interview with Walter, p. 1). He claimed his Grade 6 teacher, Rick, was the epitome of an inclusive teacher. Rick believed, "You give whatever child you have to work with, whatever they need to be successful" (Interview with Rick, p. 17). Kerri and Julia were of the same opinion. They indicated that they modified programs and expectations and made accommodations for all students in their classroom.

Although the majority believed in the "ideal" and promoted the need for case by case individualization and differentiation of instruction in the regular classroom, they also recognized the practical need to consider a range of options when programming for the best interest of each child in the current educational structure. Teresa suggested, "Some students might do better in a pull-out program … or in the IOP program and some might do better in the regular classroom, with or without an aide. The goal is for the student to feel comfortable and to see success" (Interview with Teresa, p. 3). Fourteen of the 17 participants maintained that their experience had shown them; "We can better meet the needs of kids through a continuum of programming options" (Interview with Alison, p. 4).

Candice described a common scenario for a severely disabled young boy included in her classroom. "Right now he is, theoretically, included in my classroom. However, for the most part, his program is delivered one on one by a full-time teaching assistant in a small room by the office" (Interview with Candice, p. 1). The educators in Candice's situation often questioned the value of inclusion for these students and asked *why inclusion? What are we doing for these children? Is it a reasonable thing to keep a child with their age peers even if they cannot cope academically? Is it in the child's best interest...or their peers' best interest?* Miriam responded, "Do I have an answer to that? I don't have the answer. Every child is different and every child's needs are different. It works for some and not for others" (Interview with Miriam, p. 21).

The majority of participants stood with Janice, who said:

> Teachers often establish a subjective, 'too much,' line that determines when to do the pull-out programming. This line is often drawn when either the curriculum or behavioural needs deviate too much or create too great an impact ... in the regular program and is often drawn on the basis of resources and not on the basis of student need. (Interview with Janice, p. 3)

Candice admitted that the needs in her classroom had become too extreme. She was confident she would be able to provide for all the students with additional classroom assistance, yet recognized, "The principal's hands are tied with the budget the way that it is" (Interview with Candice, p. 2).

The "make it or break it difference" for many of the participants was the availability of materials, resources and supports. Alison claimed, "Teachers do whatever they have to do...with whatever resources they can get a hold of ... to do the job" and in most cases, "do a pretty, damn good job of it" (Interview with Alison, p 2). According to Rick, one's teaching practice was second only to one's beliefs about children and learning. He suggested:

> It's for nothing if the teachers don't believe in the students in the first place. That's really what it comes down to. You need to believe that your student, whoever it happens to be, can be successful in your classroom and you will do whatever it takes to make them successful. (Interview with Rick, p. 21)

The inclusive teachers in this study used a variety of teaching strategies. The most referred to strategy was "differentiation." Patricia and Allan suggested,

> They [the students] are following a differentiated instruction program so when they are taught a lesson it might be taught at a slower pace, it might be delivered in a different way, they'll have extra time for their tests, extra time for assignments. We do a lot of stuff with learning styles and multiple intelligence to get to the differentiated model that we want to follow for these kids" (Waxvine Interview, p. 11).

Andrew indicated he followed the students' lead; "If it takes us three periods, then it takes us three periods, I don't care." He altered the expectations for some students, "You can do 20 of the 40 assigned questions. I'm not going to torture you."

An observation of Rick's science class highlighted the importance of using multiple methods of delivery. He first demonstrated the experiment, then allowed the students to conduct the experiment, in some cases, with teaching assistance. Following this, he provided varying levels of supported write-ups. The most advanced students worked completely independently. Those with the most needs received a coloured hand-out, complete with full notes and illustrations, as well as lines for writing single word or phrase responses. From an outsider's perspective, it was difficult to identify special needs students within this classroom because the program had been tailored to each individual's lneed and all students were working at their own level (Candytuft Observation, p. 1).

Rick and Andrew frequently allowed students to choose where they wished to work, the group they wished to work in and the type of assignment they wished to complete. Rick suggested he encouraged his students to "work on the higher level assignments" whenever they were ready to do so (Interview with Rick, p. 7). He outlined his expectations using marking rubrics and indicated that his students were also provided with choice in the method used to present their research work (e.g., a story, poem, speech or poster) although all four mediums had to be used at some point during their genre project (pp. 7 – 8). Andrew said, "students are allowed to leave the room to work if they need quiet, extra support or fewer distractions" (Interview with Andrew, p. 7).

The most significant difference noted between the traditional and inclusive approach was the emphasis on individual differences and the fact that all students are "wired differently. Therefore, all students learn differently" (Interview with Julia, p. 5). The observation data clearly indicated that inclusive teachers emphasized each individual's profile of strengths and needs. Both through their speech and action, they taught students that learning was an individually based concept. As was mentioned previously, Kerri asserted, "Some kids need to be taught certain skills for dealing with people. So basically you are helping them to respond based on each person's individual need" (Interview with Kerri, p. 4). From this viewpoint, it was not surprising to find that inclusive teachers also tended to utilize multiple levels of questioning and selected questions based on each individual student's need (Allan in Waxvine Interview, p. 13). Julia suggested, "Because they have different needs, they require different programming and the students seem to recognize and accept that" (Interview with Julia, p. 5).

Many of the participants identified lists of modifications and accommodations they made for students in their classrooms. Teachers routinely modified assignments by altering the number of required responses or by adapting the evaluation criterion. As well, they offered students typed notes, taped stories or a scribe when needed. Patricia said, "We do a lot of peer tutoring, we do a lot of working with groups as opposed to individual assignments. They are following the regular curriculum … it's just a different approach to doing it" (Waxvine Interview, p. 11). Rick also described the system he used to assist some students with organization. "We've got a little file system we've set up for these students because their organization skills don't exist, so all of their assignments are in these slots. They have one book to take home and that's the homework for tonight" (Interview with Rick, p. 3).

Many of the teachers in inclusive classrooms admitted, "I am not provided with any additional planning time so any programming modifications are done by me on my own time" (Interview with Candice, p. 2). Nevertheless, inclusive teachers seemed to be extremely resourceful on their own. Andrew drew upon the knowledge and expertise of his colleagues, his wife who had an honours in zoology, the teaching assistants and the students. Many emphasized the need for teachers to recognize the resourcefulness and expertise of students within their classrooms.

> The kids are more knowledgeable than most of us a lot of times because you know, they can teach each other. I did this publishing unit, the kids had to make a brochure and I had no idea. I said, "Let's just try it." It was more like a, "let's go and see approach" and of course this student came up with this great big idea and he went around and showed the rest of the kids and you should see the nice things they did. (Waxvine Interview, p. 33)

Kerri, Julia and Rick all identified professional development scenarios where they discovered practical strategies for dealing with issues in their classroom. In Kerri's case, she happened upon "a certain procedure, certain method for teaching kids, with Down's Syndrome how to read." Within a matter of a few months, she had taught a Down's Syndrome girl to read (Interview with Kerri, p. 9). Julia mentioned she found a session on "anger management–teaching kids how to deal with anger" to be particularly beneficial (Interview with Julia, p. 11). Rick suggested he "stole" his genre project from "a couple of ladies" because he thought "what a great way to differentiate my reading program" (Interview with Rick, p. 8). Even though the general consensus was that "resources are critical," the recurring mantra was ***there is not enough time to find them, to look through them, to evaluate them or adapt them*** .

The project approach was another significant feature of inclusive programs. Rick applied the principles of the Genre project he had been using in language arts to much of his teaching. He found that by allowing students more choice, clearly communicating evaluation criterion at the beginning, monitoring progress daily, "It's easy to differentiate my instruction" and claimed the result was that "everyone is working in their comfort zone" (Interview with Rick, p. 8). The participants from Dusty Miller Community School described a number of different projects operating with their school. Regarding the "Pilot Project" which was designed to teach junior high students to read, Marjorie remarked, "All of their life they have been playing catch up and doing work that is way beneath them so ... how do you go about teaching them to read without humiliating them?" (Interview with Marjorie, pp. 16 -17). "Student Tutors" was put into place so that junior high students could invest in younger students by providing remedial assistance over the noon hour and thus contribute to the overall learning community.

Identified Issues or Concerns

Regarding Students – A number of different issues arose out of the discussions regarding the students in inclusive situations. Janice suggested, "There are going to be some issues" whether the special needs students are included in the school in general or in the regular classroom (Interview with Janice, p. 12).

The participants unanimously agreed that placement decision should be based on *best interests of the student while considering the interests of the staff and students in terms of their safety and the appropriateness of the learning environment.* In some form or another, the administrators in this study spoke about the balancing act between the rights of the individual and the rights of the class. Generally, the notion of balance seemed to be an acceptable compromise. To illustrate, Janice described a case where a young man had been receiving his program in a segregated setting, initially against the wishes of his parents, because he was "considered a safety concern. His behaviour has led him to making threats and with the legal situation right now ... we are just trying to accommodate him in the building and not put him, or staff, in a situation which might compromise something." She explained how this student was entitled to a placement in the regular program and yet, it was in the best interests of all involved to segregate him temporarily. His parents accepted this decision based on the fact that it was a temporary solution (Interview with Janice, p. 4).

Betty talked extensively about the need to appropriately identify and label students because once identified, schools could obtain the additional funding required to provide the materials, resources and supports for these students whether they were to be included in the regular classroom or placed in the special education classroom (Interview with Betty, p. 13). She added, in some cases "students fall between the cracks" because "he's not needy enough, he's not been in any one school long enough to assess or develop a program for or he's been away, just moving all of the time, so it's really hard" (p. 13). The counter side to this issue was described by the majority of teachers. They claimed they felt pressured to identify students in order to obtain funding even if it was not in the best interest of the students. Teresa described this dilemma and talked about the negative impacts of labelling. "As soon as they are labelled, the students see them differently. They are isolated and different. They sometimes see themselves differently too. They just need to feel like they are a part of the students, like they belong" (Interview with Teresa, p. 7).

Allan suggested that students in junior and senior high school occasionally blocked support from outside services. "Speech isn't a big priority once they reach high school because they've given up and just don't want it. Like we just had a student who came to us yesterday, who refuses to go. So what can we do?" (Allan in Waxvine Interview, p. 26).

Many of the participants identified scenarios for students that resulted in "major gaps in learning" (Patricia in Waxvine Interview, p. 7). Patricia observed, "for the military kid who has moved a lot ... they've transferred four different provinces, four different education systems or countries, four different curriculums or ways of doing things so continuity is a real problem" (p. 8). She explained how this scenario was even more serious for students with disabilities because they may "have had problems while they were there [in Waxvine Secondary] but by the time people pick up on it, it's time to move again" (p. 9). Miriam also commented on this problem.

> The sort of transient crowd that kind of moves in an out ... some of our children come with just absolute, severe frustrations because of home lives that are less than wonderful. They have had limited life experience, have suffered cultural deprivation, are from foster parent families or single-parent families or are from the receiving and treatment homes in the area. (Interview with Miriam, p. 4)

These issues resulted in many "real life challenges for teachers" (Interview with Miriam, p. 18).

Students with severe behaviour and emotional problems were also a concern for teachers since "they had trouble managing inclusive situations" (Interview with Janice, p. 8). Janice described a scenario where the staff had struggled to get a severely behaviour disordered student to attend school. When he was attending, "the other kids haven't given him much leeway and he has responded without any skills...so it's a circular kind of thing." She suspected this student;

> Is isolating himself and he is just so consumed with anger about needing to be here. Maybe he feels that the adults here are the people he can't bear to be around, more than the other kids. I don't know. And our school isn't a comfortable place for him or maybe he thinks we are disappointed in him, or that he doesn't fit somehow or that we're not fair. (Interview with Janice, p. 15)

Even Rick, who claimed he could include all students admitted "with this fellow, we're sort of on the bubble. It's not working great. I don't have enough time and even with three of us in that classroom sometimes...it's just not enough" (Interview with Rick, p. 12). Barbara mentioned, "there is a constant unrest" when behaviour kids are included (Interview with Barbara, p. 11).

Miriam claimed "the level of the severity of the handicapping condition means a lot" (Interview with Miriam, p. 20). Throughout this research study, the participants questioned the value of including severe and profound students. Miriam provided an evocative description.

> A few years ago, I went with the Director of Special Needs, the Social Services and with the Health Department, out to have a case conference at a home in our area. It was a foster – receiving home for children of severe, for young children with severe physical problems. And the child was lying on the couch and looked to be all of 6 months old and was school aged, pre-school head start age, and she had a little light under her sock that you could see. And the little light was attached to her toe and it told you whether or not she was still breathing. And she spent most of her time in a complete unconscious state, if not all of her time. And we were called

> upon as an educational organization to provide a teacher to come into the home for homebound education and provide this child with stimulation, educational stimulation. And for how long ... ? The child died not 6 months after I visited. The child didn't have a life expectancy you know, from where she was. So I guess the question is what are we doing? What is the role of education? Because what we are doing is, if the potential is important to the preschooler who is unconscious on the couch, then the potential is just as important to the child who is very bright ... and if we sacrifice the potential of one for another we are doing the wrong thing and that's what we do all the time. We sacrifice the potential of our regular kids every day in our schools. (Interview with Miriam, pp. 28 – 29)

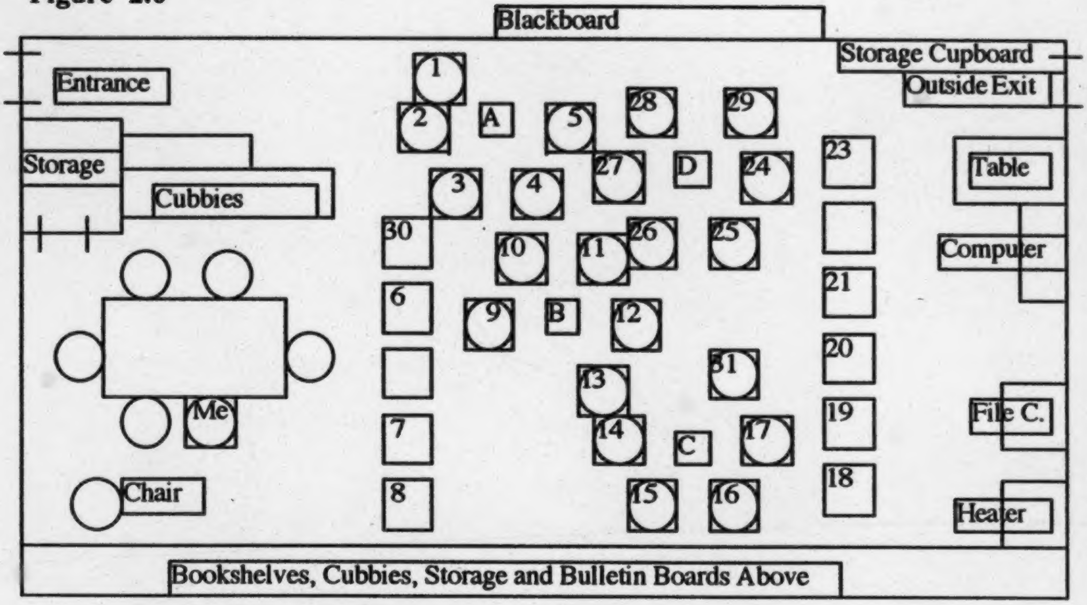
Like Miriam, Betty questioned the value of including severe children. She remarked, "for what... you get to this point ... why is this kid in here because they are so low it doesn't matter what you do?" (Interview with Betty, p. 19). According to Betty, this should be an obvious conclusion; "any psychologist will tell you as kids progress through school and the cognitive delay or the gap gets bigger, it becomes much more difficult to include them" (p. 18). Almost every participant agreed that special needs students were more easily included during the elementary years and explained that as these students progressed through the middle school years to senior high school, the challenges were much more significant.

Many participants identified the practical issues that resulted from including severe students. For example,

> because of the way the student had to be fed, the kids are so involved in that, either interest wise or frightened by it, that it does create a disturbance in the classroom situation. There just isn't enough physical space in classroom for it all to happen either (Interview with Marjorie, p. 11).

I observed, what Janice referred to as the "goldfish bowl syndrome" in an observation of a Grade 6 classroom in Browallia School. The classroom was located in a small portable. The ceilings were low. There were 34 students and the room was extremely crowded with tables, work spaces, etc. As well, every inch of available wall space was decorated with student work, creating an effect of busyness and chaos. A diagram of this classroom is presented in Figure 2.0 below. The numbered shapes represent students in the classroom. Students #18, #19, #20, #21 and #23 had been identified as having special needs.

Figure 2.0


Blackboard
Storage Cupboard
Outside Exit
Entrance
Storage
Cubbies
Table
Computer
File C.
Heater
Me
Chair
Bookshelves, Cubbies, Storage and Bulletin Boards Above
1
2
A
5
28
29
3
4
27
D
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For some of the participants, the impact of inclusion on regular students was a big issue. Alison talked about the "disruption" and "noise level" and the resulting "frustration for regular program students" (Interview with Alison, p. 12). Miriam suggested that some teachers found it difficult to teach to variety of needs and as a result, their attention was divided. She compared this scenario to her own situation and claimed it was difficult to do a good job of anything when your focus is divided. Teresa identified the "stigma" for special needs students when "identified" or "singled out" (Interview with Teresa, p. 3). Allan countered,

> It doesn't matter how you do it, the kids all know the pecking order and it doesn't matter whether you have some of them in this class or this class or some of them here or all of them in one, the pecking order is still there. And no matter how you do it, it is still going to be there. (Waxvine Interview, p. 34)

Rick also claimed, "Kids know who they are anyway." He believed it was the teacher's job to teach the kids "how to make everyone feel welcome" (Interview with Rick, p. 7).

A few participants described the importance of involving students in the placement and programming process while others argued against it. Marjorie suggested, for behaviour disordered students, "It is critical that they be involved in the process of setting goals and determining consequences for their behaviour" (Interview with Marjorie, p. 2). Betty argued, "Inherent to these students, they don't have the strategies to identify what they need to do to help themselves, so often, it's not the most productive" (Interview with Betty, p. 5).

Regarding Parents – The conversations regarding parent involvement also revealed a number of issues. "Sometimes the parents of special needs kids can be overbearing or demanding because of the situation with their child" (Interview with Marjorie, p. 8). To accommodate parents, the participants talked about the need to provide options and choices to parents. They also suggested that parents needed a variety of supports as well as,to learn how to assist their child. Clear communication and the involvement of parents in the school community were identified as being pivotal to the success of their inclusive programs.

According to Candice, "Parental wishes often drive inclusive placements and in some cases these placements are not always appropriate." She felt like her professional opinion "goes down the tank according to what the parent wants" (Interview with Miriam, p. 24). Kerri approached this issue slightly differently. She explained how she would voice her concerns to parents and then allow them to make the choice (Interview with Kerri, p. 7). Miriam claimed it was important to consider the parent's perspective "because quite frankly, we make educational decisions that aren't in the best interest of that child and their parent may know that that is not the right educational decision for them, even better than we do" (Interview with Miriam, p. 24). On the other hand, she had observed that many parents have difficulty identifying what they really want for their child. "Sometimes parents get caught up in this whole mainstreaming thing – 'I want this thing for my child and they have a right to this,' ... without thinking about whether or not it is the right thing for my child" (p. 24).

Miriam indicated, when parents "do not like the way we place their children, they will appeal to the Board and from the Board, they appeal to the Minister." Miriam suggested, "Most of the time, we try and make sure the services are in place so the number of parents who actually appear, are relatively small" (Interview with Miriam, pp. 5 – 7) Marjorie also commented on this issue:

> Parent sometimes go beyond the school level gate-keeper ... Well then we're into a different space but first of all most people wouldn't do that. Secondly, most people shouldn't do that because if the administrator is blocking the involvement of their child in this program, what does that say about what will happen, say if they force the issue. So, through me some parents will respond differently to that and it's a challenge and they'll fight it and they think that somehow that won't colour their child's school experience. They get here and it does and it will. And it should tell them something important ... (Interview with Marjorie, p. 1)

Still, the participants indicated that parents were "surprisingly supportive" of the educational decisions that were made. Andrew mentioned, "Parents need to trust a positive track record. They need to know that we do care about their children" (Interview with Andrew, p. 5).

The issue of "balance" surfaced time and again for the administrators in this study. Miriam described a situation in her community which caused her considerable stress.

> As an administrator, it makes it interesting when your very settled long-time community makes certain demands and expectations for behaviour and academic performance and then, the other end, where mom and dad are rarely home, where the bar is often home, where mom and dad don't exist and the foster family is there and the behaviours that come with that, meet with those other children. And the settled group says, "What are you doing to protect our children?" And on the other side, the issue is, "What are we doing to help those children who have those real needs when they come to us?" (Interview with Miriam, p. 4)

Marjorie suggested it was the administrator's responsibility to mediate "because if you make teachers face those parents by themselves, it's a big emotional thing, a big drain on their energy" (Interview with Marjorie, p. 9).

Occasionally, parents wanted to know "how the money attached to their child" was being used (Interview with Alison, p. 3). These parents wanted to ensure that the funding received was being directly applied to their child's program. Alison told parents, "When it comes through, we put the aide there" (p. 3). Miriam suggested, "I try very hard to cultivate the notion that revenues are just that, revenues." She explained to parents, "... as long as we are providing the appropriate services to your child ... we can also serve the needs of those who do not receive funding, for the betterment of the school" (Interview with Miriam, p. 6). Betty described a scenario where she argued with a parent:

> ADHD is grouped into the mild and moderate funding. Your child gets an additional $300.00. ... you know, that would pay for me to work on your child's IPP for two days. That would pay for a teacher aide to be in the classroom, what would it be, four or five days max.? What four days do you want?' (Interview with Betty, p. 11)

Parents also demanded to be a part of the placement decision-making process. Andrew felt this was justified because "you can't repeat a child in Alberta without the parent consent so why would we make them go into a classroom without parent consent?" (Interview with Andrew, p. 14). He also commented, especially during the middle school years, parents needed to be provided with a variety of options and choices. To illustrate Andrew suggested, "In one case, the parents opted to place their child in a modified class ... because they felt that the kid would get what he needed and if he really worked hard and gained confidence he would do well at the high school" (p. 4). In another case, Andrew suggested that the parents tended to "push the whole way through ... and would rather their daughter be in the regular stream getting 50 or 55%, than in a modified class getting 70 or 75%." He indicated, some parents had a hard time conceptualizing their child's future and as a result, he counselled them to consider that an academic placement in high school would not guarantee university entrance if the marks were too low. Andrew encouraged parents to place students where they would be the most successful, yet acknowledged that this was an ongoing struggle.

For some regular program parents, the inclusion of special needs children presented a problem because they were concerned about their impact on the learning environment. The participants suggested that parents were generally tolerant and accepting of the students with mild or moderate disabilities, yet felt strongly that the regular classroom was not an appropriate placement for students with behaviour disorders or disabilities that were disruptive. According to Miriam, "It's the behavioural stuff that makes it unpalatable for the parents of the other children" (Interview with Miriam, p. 23). She described a story where a parent said, "Your teacher is spending all his time with this kid who is taking up, you know, wrecking the learning environment or whatever and my daughter is unhappy in that classroom because of this" (p. 22). The result, Miriam suggested, was that "families pull out of this school and take their children to another school" (p. 23).

A second concern that had been expressed by regular program parents dealt with the issue of programming for the gifted and talented. Many questioned the allocation of special education funding and believed that programming in the gifted and talented area was not adequate. Miriam believed their concerns were justified.

> I'm sorry, they are right. We call it gifted and we do differentiated program but the truth of the matter is that we do not do program for high end academic kids. And don't make the mistake about gifted, we are not talking about gifted, we are talking about high-end academic kids, with high IQs and the reason being is because the needs are more pressing at the special needs end. (Interview with Miriam, p. 29)

Walter described the gifted and talented program that was running in his school and suggested it was "barely adequate. You wish you could do more" (Interview with Walter, p. 18). The general consensus was that the "needs are more pressing at the special needs end" (Interview with Miriam, p. 29). Many of the participants suggested that the parents of gifted children would have a much easier time providing opportunities for their children than the parents "of a needy child." Therefore, "We piece together whatever we can give them with the attitude, 'God gave you a brain. Be thankful!'" (Interview with Miriam, p. 29). Walter admitted, "If I have to spend the last dollar that I have on one or the other and I have to choose, then I am going to spend it on the kid that really needs it" (Interview with Walter, p. 19).

In light of the many parent issues, the participants recognized that parents occasionally needed support from the school. Miriam suggested that special needs parents often had difficulty learning to cope with and accept their child's disability or condition because they grieved the loss of every developmental milestone and struggled with the guilt associated with the extra responsibility or burden that was placed on the family.

> We experienced that in spades with a young man, a few years ago, who was in a wheelchair. And Mom lost it, just completely lost it, because when he was a baby it was completely normal for him to be lying on a floor with the other babies playing. But the other babies got up and walked away one day and he didn't. (Interview with Miriam, p. 25)

Sometimes parents neglected to pursue assessment or testing because they were *afraid to learn about their child's situation, didn't want their child labelled* or *were concerned about the resulting ramifications*. In these situations, the participants suggested that parents needed continual and ongoing encouragement. Marjorie described a scenario for one student whose mother refused to allow her son to be tested. Over time the mother finally agreed and the result was that the student was diagnosed with Asperger's Syndrome. "It was marvellous because he was one of the people who responded wonderfully to chemical treatment" (Interview with Marjorie, p. 14).

Allan suggested that parents occasionally needed instruction, coaching or guidance in order to learn "what they need to be doing as a parent to make sure this kid is successful." He claimed he had encountered parents who would say, "How come I have these things I have to be doing when I go home? It's the kid's problem." He added, "We end up doing a parenting course a lot of times with these parents" (Waxvine Interview, p. 15). Andrew had also touched on this issue. Parents will occasionally, "try other avenues. They will hire tutors or take them to additional programs" (Interview with Andrew, p. 14). Miriam had observed, "Some of our neediest children also have, quite predictably, needy families too" (Interview with Miriam, p. 14). She recommended, "When there is a tremendous amount of support from home and when the home and school are working together ... the gaps will close (p. 20).

According to the participants, clear communication with parents was essential. Betty indicated, "I think the only time you run into resistance from parents is when they feel like they don't know what is going on" (Interview with Betty, p. 3). Kerri commented, "more communication is required with the parents of special needs kids than regular program kids" because their programs are different, in some cases, from those in the regular program (Interview with Kerri, p. 11). Julia described the process of parent involvement in the development of the IPP and suggested "their involvement really makes a difference" (Interview with Julia, p. 4). Regarding the parent involvement in the IPP process, Kerri claimed, "I have personally struggled with that ... looking at the goals that parents have set that might be different from the goals that I see for that child" (Interview with Kerri, p. 11). Marjorie emphasized the need to be honest and straightforward with parents and suggested, "you do what you honestly can. ... you let parents know that you don't know what you are going to do in this situation or that situation but that you will try" (Interview with Marjorie, p. 10). Rick agreed, "Mom and Dad need to know the reality too" (Interview with Rick, p. 13).

Throughout her interview, Marjorie talked about the need to include parents in the school community whether it be through their commitment of time to the extra-curricular program or through their willingness to share of their gifts, talents and skills in program areas. Betty encouraged parents to describe "an area that really motivates a child, ... to provide any suggestions that help with kinaesthetic, hands-on areas, what these kids like, their interests, any materials that might be relevant, their learning styles... because they have a better feel for their children than we do" (Interview with Betty, p. 3). Kerri concluded:

> I think the parents play a very important role in what happens for their child and I think that, particularly in the past, parents have had to take the role of being a vigilant, in fighting for their child's rights and being an advocate. Now I think that role is changing. Parents are more present in schools and in classrooms ... it's just that sometimes teachers don't know what to do with that. I have to believe that they have the best interests of their child in mind. (Interview with Kerri, p. 12)

Regarding Fiscal Restraint – A significant issue that was raised by every participant in this study was the concern over the financial situation in education in Alberta. Unanimously, the participants announced *the truth is that there just isn't enough money to meet the needs of our special needs children.* The administrators focused mostly on their inability to provide appropriate programming within the current funding structure, the cost of student assessment required to obtain funding and the limitations placed on them by the provincial government. They suggested that site-based management was a misnomer since it did not realistically describe their administrative practice and suggested that creative budgeting was required to make ends meet The teachers spoke mostly about the impact on their classrooms (i.e., *class size issues, a shortage of resources and supports, inadequate teaching assistant support and planning time and the need to take money out of their own pockets*).

According to Allan, schools in Alberta have "site-based management with very little control." He indicated, "When you say our budget is about 2.3 million dollars and we have about 500,000 dollars to spend after doing the staff and the whole business ... that leaves very little" (Waxvine Interview, p. 10). The administrators suggested they spent between 88% and 94% of their budget on staffing. Marjorie claimed her school board had directed her not to spend more than 90% on staffing, yet her staff had decided to do so "because we value the human resources more" (Interview with Marjorie, p. 5). Miriam confirmed, "Financially, it's bleak. My budget averages out at 94.4% staffing" (Interview with Miriam, p. 12). She laughed at the concept of site-based management and said, "I am responsible for the financial situation in this building and yet, I'm answerable to the Director of Special Services who, in turn, is answerable to Alberta Learning. Alberta Learning sets out the requirements ... the structures and the regulations" (p. 5). For the most part, the participants believed that the provincial block funding structure limited flexibility and choice because it specified how the funding should be allocated.

Walter was one of three administrators who did not feel bound by "what's in the gifted and talented pool, what's in the special education pool, what's in this other pool" (Interview with Walter, p. 15). He argued:

> I will take the stance that it is my job to provide, to the best of my ability, to meet the needs of the child. Now if I can do that for a dollar, then I do it for a dollar, regardless of whether I get the $9,000.00 for them or not. If it takes me $20,000.00, then it will take me $20,000.00, whether or not I get $9,000.00. And that's really where we get into some of the big problems. If I have three children that are severe, we receive for them an extra $9,000.00 each, which is wonderful

> and I appreciate that however, I need three TAs and a TA costs me $25,000.00, so where do I get the money from? Well it comes out of the school budget The money that is available simply doesn't cover the needs of our special needs kids. (pp. 15 – 17)

Allan also suggested there was "a fair amount of latitude to decide how to set it all up" (Waxvine Interview, p. 10). Nevertheless, he suspected this was going to change.

> In our district, a certain amount is skimmed off the top for our special needs coordinator, but with the new special education review the structure is going to change. It's going to be a block funding pool based on the last five years and so, that would make a big difference because right now, we get it because we apply individually for it. They want to prioritize kids in the school system instead of each school being responsible for what they have. They are going to have a district pot and we are going to end up losing because we are going to be providing for the smaller schools. Also, because it's based on need, if the needs change, you don't need as much money. (Waxvine Interview, pp. 6 – 7)

Regarding the provincial directives for coding of special education students, Miriam claimed, "The government has also dropped the bar in terms of what qualifies for funding" (Interview with Miriam, p. 12). Betty explained, "The only money that comes into our school from our special education kids, is our kids on our code 42s – the severe." For students identified as mild or moderate, "It amounts to $300.00 per child, which is nothing. It literally does not cover ... our program" (Interview with Betty, p.11). Many of the participants suggested that "needs based funding" pressured principals and teachers to identify students, even if it was not in their students' best interest. Patricia described a scenario where a student who had qualified for the severe grant funding was no longer eligible because his behavioural status had changed. "If we stop having a one on one teacher assistant with him then, he may revert back to his old behaviours and we'll be back where we started from" (Waxvine Interview, p. 7). The reaction, for many administrators, was that they fudged the paperwork required by the school division in order to obtain funding to provide a teaching assistant.

A few principals talked about the need to "falsely report" information to their central office administrators. Marjorie described a scenario where the school division policy forced a certain model of interaction for students and teaching assistants.

> I had huge hassles with the central office at first. I said, "you cannot make this a part of your TA contract that if a person is giving half of their time to a student who is in the TA2 bracket, that they get paid as a TA2 for all of their time, because you know what you are doing, you are forcing me to put one person with this severe child all of the time because I cannot afford to put two people with him." "Well, what do you mean?" "Well if I put two people with him half time, that is better for the health of all the individuals." So that is the best model but I have to pay two TAs as TA2s when there is really only one student in that category. So what I ended up doing is saying to my staff, "We have one student who would qualify for needing a TA2. How about if we take the difference between a TA2 salary and a TA1 salary and I'll divide that up between all of you? And nobody will be a TA2 and that way we can put anybody with this student for any amount of time." And the TAs were fine with that ... So what I did was falsely report their hours as 31 hours a week instead of 30 hours. So they make, what, maybe 500 or 600 dollars more a year and nobody gets paid as a TA2. And the central office guy just shook his head when I told him. He said, "How come you have all these people on 31 hours? Last year you had them all down as 30 hours." "Well," I said, "If I tell you, you have to promise that you won't make me stop." So I said, "Well I didn't want my TAs to feel that they weren't getting the same privileges as other TAs so I divided the difference between the TA1 and TA2, worked it out in hours, gave them that extra hour a week, that they don't work, as pay." (Interview with Marjorie, pp. 19 – 20).

Many of the administrators mentioned that they needed *to be creative, be subversive, to find ways around the structures, understand that the regulations have to work for you and not the other way around.*

Interestingly, at least half of the participants believed that the main impetus for the inclusive movement was the current economic reality. They insinuated that the provincial government was forcing inclusion because it was seen to be more cost effective. Even Janice, who was an advocate of inclusion and believed the inclusive movement was a product of the "Human Rights movement," claimed, "The reality is that it is not feasible without money. Why have we closed all the little hospitals all over the place? We can't afford it. We can't afford to do what is right for people." She stated, "Inclusion is incredibly more expensive" (Interview with Janice, p. 18).

According to Miriam, "If we are not going to have segregated programs, then we have to have our mainstreaming supported and mainstreaming is not cheaper" (Interview with Miriam, p. 10). Her own Master's research on mainstreaming revealed, "It is about one third to two thirds more expensive to provide for their [students with disabilities] needs in the mainstream." She said this was "especially true, in a small system (i.e., small population) with a large geographical area" (p. 11). Through a detailed cost comparison, Miriam illustrated the relative cost of including one severe student.

> That full-time teacher assistant costs approximately $25,000.00, as an average cost for a teaching assistant. A behaviour child with the per pupil grant and the code 42 funding will bring in about $13,000.00. So ... the difference between 13 and 25 is what it costs to mainstream a child of high needs, special need. And some of those children need more than a full-time teacher aide because they can't be left alone for recess or for the noon hour. And they have to be met at the bus in the morning and be taken to the bus at the end of the day or delivered; driven there and driven back. And now you are talking more than a single teacher aide so at the very least, a code 42 who is severe will take a full-time teacher aide and that makes them $12,000.00 short of what they will actually get in revenue to pay for that teacher aide. (Interview with Miriam, p. 12)

Allan and Patricia took issue with the fact that "Alberta Learning requires current "psychological assessments that results in a recommendation that says a student needs a specific accommodation ... at $800.00 a shot.". He continued, "What's the difference if we give a kid another thirty minutes on a test. We've been doing it ever since they were in Grade 7 with us and now, they are in Grade 12, we have to change?" Allan explained that the "testing becomes stale dated after three years." Thus, rural school divisions have to contract psychologists every three years to obtain permission to provide accommodations like the one described above. In a rural district like the Butterfly Flower School Division, Allan saw this as "an extremely costly and unnecessary expenditure" (Waxvine Interview, p. 24).

In many cases, the participants talked about the need to supplement their budget through additional fundraising or grant writing (e.g., AC program, corporate sponsorship, etc.). Rick and Allan both described the literacy program they were doing for "our AC moneys." Allan said, "We have another $41,000.00 that comes to us for that program ... and you can go to workshops where AC will pay for your professional development" (Waxvine Interview, p. 31). Waxvine Secondary also used this additional funding to "integrate the ICT (technology) outcomes into their program." As well, Allan described how "every Wednesday after school, we have a technology set-up. We've set aside some of this money to pay two technology experts on staff and they try and bring everybody up to speed in certain areas" (p. 32).

It was apparent that many participants felt it was necessary to keep current with technology and other professional development opportunities. Allan claimed the 300 dollars a year provided for professional development "is not enough money" (Waxvine Interview, p. 32). Betty suggested that this economic reality prevented teachers from asking for professional development funds because they realized "it costs a great deal of money and it means sub-time" (Interview with Betty, p. 7). Patricia believed, that while a few teachers were willing to pay for this training "out of their own pocket," in most cases, "it's done very infrequently" (Waxvine Interview, p. 32).

Many of the administrators commented on the fact that related, outside support services (e.g., Capital Health) were not adequately maintained by the provincial government and as a result, were limited in the support they could provide to schools. At the time of this research, there appeared to be a cost-sharing situation between school boards and their contracted agencies. For example,

> If it's beyond a certain level that any child will get then you have to pay above and beyond that out of educational dollars and that means that funding that is in little tubes from the top, expecting us to tie it together at the bottom, has to change. Because instead what we do is we argue over who is financially responsible or it comes out of education dollars and then the education people are reluctant to call upon services unless they are forced to do so because it costs regular children out there. (Interview with Miriam, p. 28)

Patricia and Allan added, "You can get those services and agencies in to meet needs, but you do that at their convenience, not at our convenience" (Waxvine Interview, p. 26). They suggested that there was a need for more immediate action in schools. By March of the school year Betty realized, "We haven't even got half our kids tested yet How beneficial is that?" (Interview with Betty, p. 16).

All of the teachers described the impact of the financial situation on classroom conditions. "It's all money. Money is what drives class size, what pays for the aide, just to go to the bookshop and buy some books, we do need resources. I think it's important" (Interview with Kerri, p. 11). Miriam also emphasized this point:

> There needs to be enough teacher time and teacher aide time to not only have the teacher aide working with the child but, also to have the planning time to work with the professional, who has the time to research the needs of that child, look at program and develop that program ... and it all starts with money. (Interview with Miriam, p. 17)

All of the administrators recognized, "Any time you factor in extra preparation or planning time, it's money" and commented "the funding isn't sufficient to provide for any of that" (Interview with Miriam, p. 19). In most cases, the administrators admitted that they tended to "pick up the slack" when it came to providing extra time for planning, teaching assistants and so on. Tongue in cheek, Walter stated, "The principal, being the wonderful person that he is, decided not to give himself any prep time – give it out to everybody else" (Interview with Walter, p. 15). Miriam had taken on the responsibilities of the school counsellor/special education coordinator, who was on maternity leave, in order to reallocate her salary and provide a teaching assistant for a needy class. As well, every administrator suggested one of their rationales for taking on teaching duties was so they could provide extra planning and preparation time for teachers.

Miriam presented one other issue she claimed resulted from the current, limited, provincial financial situation. She argued that teaching assistants were grossly underpaid and therefore, current expectations for their performance were out of line. She stated:

> I mean $25,000.00 is the total cost of a teacher aide. That's not what they make. That includes all their benefits that the board pays and the whole works. You make, what is it, 18 to 20 thousand if you're lucky as a teacher aide. And look at the children we are giving those teacher aides ... our neediest. How can we expect teacher aides to put in extra time at the end of the day to meet and plan with teachers when they are paid considerably small dollars in relation to what a teacher gets?" (Interview with Miriam, p. 17)

Barriers to Inclusion

One might ask, if the general consensus amongst the participants was that inclusion was "a good thing," and the provincial directive mandated inclusive practice, why was it not occurring consistently throughout the province? The data from this study revealed many attitudinal, practical, logistical and pedagogical barriers which prevented this ideal and presented real-life challenges for educators.

The data conclusively indicatedthat a belief in inclusive philosophy (i.e., the values and purposes of inclusive education) was of prime importance. From Rick's perspective, "It's for nothing if the teachers don't believe in the first place and not enough of that belief is out there" (Interview with Rick, p. 21). Secondly, inclusive education was dependent on the attitude or mindset of the involved participants. It was clear that many educators continued to struggle with inclusive philosophy and its implications for their educational practice and therefore, approached inclusion with a negative attitude. These participants continued to support the traditional dual-track method of delivery, were focused on curriculum and a levelled grading system and believed that students' needs were best met in homogenous groupings. For those in support of inclusion, they felt it was this factor, more than any other, that created a powerful, real-life barrier to inclusion.

Given that the administrators were the "gate keepers" of inclusive programs, it was at this level, "where some people get sent away, even if there may be a teacher who is very willing" (Interview with Marjorie, p. 3). In some cases, the administrators did not support inclusive philosophy. In others, the administrative decision-making prevented inclusive practice. Thus, the administrator or administrative team was seen as a potential barrier to inclusion. For example, the administration of Johnny Jump-up High School believed in the traditional special education approach and as a result frequently made decisions that pre-empted inclusive practice. Alison stated, "We've just made it the administration's decision to choose to spend our special education funding on a special education teacher who would provide pull-out programming rather than provide two teaching assistants who could support students in the classroom" (Interview with Alison, p. 3).

Even in the cases where the administrators believed in inclusive philosophy, a number of them commented on the specific factors which impeded their ability to create inclusive communities. They suggested, *they could only do so much*; *their hands were tied by the budgeting process; we inherited the staffing equation;* or *the staff won't support it.* For some, these intervening factors, which were often directly correlated to insufficient educational funding, were significant enough to obstruct attempts at inclusion. Betty explained:

> We can only work with what we can work with. There is no one in this building who is not working. I'm teaching 0.6 and adminstrating 0.4 and I'm also doing all the special ed. stuff in my 0.4. Believe me, it's just not enough time and time costs money and I think everybody realizes that. (Interview with Betty, p. 6)

In a few cases though, the administrators mentioned they were attempting "to work through it all" in order to move toward inclusion (Interview with Betty, p. 7).

Teacher skill and ability was also seen as a barrier to inclusion. Betty suggested it was not uncommon for teachers to claim they "don't know how to modify the materials, ... are not aware of the different accommodations you can make, are computer illiterate or need strategies, materials, resources and in-servicing" (Interview with Betty, p. 5). For many of the participants, including students with a wide variety of needs, learning styles and behaviours had, as an end result, a requirement for an increased amount of knowledge (e.g., *specific teaching strategies, learning styles, differentiation, emotional intelligence, information about disabilities, technologies* and so on). Kerri concluded, "One of the problems with inclusion is that I don't think it is possible for every teacher to be trained in everything" (Interview with Kerri, p. 11). The issue of on-going teacher training and development was identified as a critical requirement yet the majority agreed, "A three day course is not going to make the difference" (Interview with Marjorie, p. 6).

Furthermore, many administrators questioned whether "the University is training teachers at all ... that they are going to be dealing with special needs kids in the classroom" (Interview with Miriam, p. 27). The most recent graduates, Julia and Teresa, indicated they were required to take one course on inclusion as part of their undergraduate program. Julia claimed, "It was awesome. I wish I would have taken more special education courses" (Interview with Julia, p. 11). Teresa, on the other hand, did not feel her University training prepared her for the demands of her position (Interview with Teresa, p. 8). The veteran teachers suggested that one University level course on inclusion would do little in the way of preparing teachers for all eventualities (Interview with Alison, p. 6).

During Barbara's tenure of 23 years, she had observed that class sizes and the needs of students in general had increased, special education students with severe needs were being included and suggested, as the fabric of the regular classroom had been changing, the expectations and requirements for teacher performance had been increasing. Barbara felt strongly that planning for more than one or two programs with the current level of support was "virtually impossible." She went as far as to say, "Those who say they can, haven't really tried it" (Interview with Barbara, p. 10). Every participant commented on the demands of working with severe students and concluded, it was "draining over time" (Interview with Marjorie, p. 19).

Regarding the inclusion of severe special needs students, Candice and Rick both recognized that competent and willing teachers were frequently "rewarded" for their efforts with the "placement of additional needy kids" in their classroom (Interview with Candice, p. 2).

> One of the biggest problems with inclusion is that it's a tug of war for the teacher and of course teachers, I mean: a) you'd be a fool to want more work than you already have, b) the other thing is that a lot of times people don't appreciate the fact that you are willing to include these kids in your classroom. (Interview with Rick, p. 19)

A number of participants expressed concerns about the number of students that could be accommodated within the regular classroom and questioned whether there should be a cap relative to the total number of students in the classroom. Rick questioned, "Can you cap them? What happens to the kids that are over that cap? They still have to go somewhere. Somebody has to take them" (Interview with Rick, p. 16).

Miriam described the reverse scenario for the district programs operating in her school. She stated, "Then you get a child who you really do need to go to a system program because you can't meet their needs in the school and so you have no room in the system program to support them? They end up in the regular classroom" (Interview with Miriam, p. 11).

Central to many of the participants' concerns was the aspect of time. Walter polled his staff to identify the issues, the resources and supports that were needed to support inclusion and found that "probably of anything, the biggest thing was time" (Interview with Walter, p. 21). The issue of "time" resounded throughout the concerns identified by participants. They listed *time for preparation and planning, to find materials and resources, to evaluate and adapt materials and resources, to differentiate instruction or individualize, to provide additional one on one assistance, to monitor student progress effectively, to collaborate and plan cooperatively with colleagues and teaching assistants, to assess students for funding purposes, consult with specialists and outside support personnel* as well as *to attend inservicing and training needed to stay current.* The list was exhaustive. As well, teachers reported that the required IPP process was *extremely time consuming, cumbersome and was unnecessary paperwork that takes time away from students.* Alison suggested, "Teachers know the realities and so they just don't ask for the things they really need" because it often "comes at the expense of students" (Interview with Alison, p. 10).

Administrators painted a picture of the current fiscal situation in Alberta which required grant writing, funding applications and fundraising ventures, all of which took considerable time and manpower, "often at the expense of students" (Interview with Barbara, p. 10). Inclusion also called for additional planning meetings, support meetings, IPP meetings and parent meetings which were frequently scheduled "on one's own time" (Waxvine Interview, p. 14).

Time was also factor as it pertained to the role of the teaching assistant. As was mentioned previously, Miriam maintained that the "inadequate hourly rate" discouraged teaching assistants from spending additional volunteer time to plan collaboratively with teachers (Interview with Miriam, p. 17). Many of the teachers were concerned about how to maximize the teaching assistant's time for their students' benefit. Janice shared, "If the teacher needs to spend five minutes every class helping the teacher aide get set up...that time really adds up and becomes significant" (Interview with Janice, p. 12).

> Many teachers are looking for specific suggestions about how can I use them but, also what are there roles? It's a time thing and sort of, "Oh, thank you very much. You gave me a teacher aide. I've been asking for one for such a long time. Now, how am I going to find the time to deal with that?" (p. 7)

Kerri recommended that administrators find a way to provide "one educational assistant ... rather than piecing time together because it adds to your load in that you are managing that other person" (Interview with Kerri, p. 11). Like many others, she accepted this reality because she realized the cost of "providing a full-time aid for each classroom" (Interview with Kerri, p. 11).

Another major barrier that was identified was the current financial situation in Alberta. According to Janice, the standard of education has moved downward, along with the economic reality in education. "We used to say we would provide the best program for everybody and then we would provide the best we could and then the appropriate and now it's the best we can afford" (Interview with Janice, p. 19). The participants unanimously declared, "It's not enough" to provide for inclusive programs. At the same time, the majority stressed that improved educational funding would significantly improve the conditions for inclusive programs.

Throughout the funding debate, the participants exposed a variety of mixed messages they received from Alberta Learning. Almost all of the teachers felt compelled to *include all students, make a place for all students and program for all students* and yet, many had difficulty balancing this expectation with the standards and curricular goals set out by Alberta Learning. The administrators talked about how difficult it was to balance the needs of their school within the rules, regulations and politics of the provincial government. Many of the provincial and school division policies and guidelines limited their ability to plan for their specific scenarios.

Overall, a surprising finding was the degree of participant uncertainty expressed throughout the interviews. It seemed like there was a high level of concern that the "powers that be" would not approve of their feelings, perceptions and comments regarding inclusion (Interview with Rick, p. 15). For example, the participants used phrases such as: *Is this being taped? You didn't hear me say that, right? Just between you and me ... You're not going to print that are you? What if somebody finds out? I wouldn't say this in public. The truth of the matter is ...* and so on. I would suspect that educator uncertainty was a barrier to inclusion since it revealed "fear" as a factor inhibiting inclusion.

One standpoint expressed by every participant was that the regular classroom was not an appropriate placement for all students all of the time. The type and severity of a child's handicapping condition was seen as a barrier to inclusion. The adjective "too" was used to describe a variety of conditions that were deemed to be *too extreme, too severe, too disruptive, too low, too volatile, too fragile, etc.* As well, the participants suggested inclusion becomes increasingly difficult as students progress through the years because the "gap" (socially, emotionally, behaviourally and academically) becomes "too great." Consequently, there appeared to be a range of handicapping conditions that could be accommodated on a regular basis in the regular classroom.

Forcing an inclusive model for all students and for all staff was a significant barrier. For students, this frequently resulted in inappropriate placements and programming based on "where you can provide for that student, not always what is in the best interest of that student" (Interview with Janice, p. 3). The involved staff often reacted negatively and sabotaged attempts at inclusion. Miriam admitted, "There are a lot of things that we don't do really well in education" (Interview with Miriam, p. 2). Rick had difficulty with his colleagues unwillingness to adapt and change. He stated, "It just boggles my mind. The teaching profession is, we are, agents of change. That's what we do. We are training students to adapt to change and yet, as individuals, we are so afraid of change, it's just unreal." (Interview with Rick, p. 20).

Many of the current practices in education did not support inclusion. The participants talked about the *importance of continuity for included students with respect to* *grade to grade reporting and student documentation; teaching standards and expectations; student movement and varying provincial standards* and *the case management between involved outside agencies.* As well, inclusion called for a collaborative approach and at the time of this research the participants suggested that *their school schedules and the absence of resources and supports made it difficult for them to work collaboratively with colleagues.* Finally, inclusion called for increased lines of communication: *make time to answer e-mails, call parents, involve parents, newsletters home, keep up on the zoom line (a school division news line), attend the weekly meetings, schedule update meetings with parents* and so on.

The aspect of increased parent involvement was also identified as a barrier. Teachers and administrators described "the balancing act" – balancing the needs of the students with disabilities and their families, with the rights of all other children and their families. Many participants indicated *they did not know how to handle the increased parent involvement, were not comfortable with the uncertainty of the parent's role and felt stressed by the demands of their increased involvement and the need for more communication.*

Finally, the element of size was identified as a barrier as it related to the classroom, school and school division. Rick voiced the concern of every participant and made a compelling argument for smaller class sizes:

> A friend of mine is working in a mine in New Guinea and they are looking to move schools because the teachers there are very poor. The teacher has six students in a Grade 6 class and his daughter's in Grade 6. And he asked me, "What would you do if you had six students in your classroom?" I said, "We'd fly … and I don't care where they are at. It wouldn't matter. If you only have six kids you can take all of them and you can send them." I mean part of the Sylvan Learning Center success is based on that, the one on one stuff. I'm trying to do that same job with 28 kids and six special needs kids. It's nuts! (Interview with Rick, p. 17)

According to Marjorie, the size of the school was also a barrier to inclusion. She argued, in a small school, "If we all know one another then it is so easy for us to see how we can help one another and how we can collectively sort out a situation." She recognized that larger schools may be able to provide more resources because of the 'economy of scale,' yet recommended inclusive communities rely heavily on the human resources and therefore, when teachers come to work as a "whole person" you have all the resources you need (Interview with Marjorie, p. 16).

Patricia and Allan identified a number of barriers related to the size of their rural school division. They claimed that large rural school divisions could not provide the same supportive infrastructure that was provided in city systems. One difference was that rural school divisions had to contract support services, sometimes at great distances, which was costly and difficult to organize. Allan explained,

> There are more high schools in this jurisdiction than there are in the city of Edmonton. It's 5,000 square kilometres. It's a huge district. And in a rural district this size, we don't have enough students who need their own private OT or PT on staff so they have to contract that service out. Like if the division office hired one psychologist, it would not be enough. That psychologist would be running all the time and the services he could provide to any one school, would be minimal. (Waxvine Interview, p. 5)

To conclude, in Alberta middle schools, even the most inclusive minded participants were challenged to provide equitable, inclusive learning opportunities for their students. They struggled with the day to day dilemmas over educational philosophy and the implications for teaching practice, the systemic structures which undermined inclusive practice, the practical limitations in terms of funding, time, curriculum and assessment procedures, class size, etc., as well as the changing roles and expectations for involved personnel.

How is Success in Inclusion Defined?

The third subsidiary research question gave the participants an opportunity to reflect on and evaluate their experiences with inclusion. Measuring success in inclusion appeared to be subject to much controversy and debate even though there was consensus on what assessment entailed. Nevertheless, all of the participants were excited to share their success stories and positive outcomes whether they philosophically believed in and supported inclusion or not. As well, even the most inclusive minded participants accepted there were negative outcomes for staff and students within the current educational structure.

At the end, an important finding was that inclusion does exist in some Alberta schools and is working for some students and their families. A goal of this research was to find ways to replicate these successes in all schools in order to ethically achieve fairness and equity for all students.

Measuring Success in Inclusion

Miriam indicated that inclusion in schools "has only become a full-fledged practice within the last 13 years." Prior to that time, she emphasized that "we had special needs schools ... for children who were significantly out of whack with their ability to manage curriculum at the grade level." She suggested, "change in education happens slowly" and encouraged today's educators to reflect on their practice and evaluate their programs not only for special needs students but for all students (Interview with Miriam, p. 26).

Measuring success in inclusion appeared to depend somewhat on each participant's individual philosophical orientation. Marjorie cautioned, "We need to be really, really careful to assess case by case ... because every one of these students is a totally different person, coming from a different place" (Interview with Marjorie, p. 4). According to Betty, "Teachers need to assess on what they teach and only what they teach. They need to be able to make their own assessments" and "report on all the different elements of student growth" (Interview with Betty, p. 11). Barbara provided an example that illustrated the need for teachers to "teach to the group." "I can write up a program ... it's a little bit generic but if it fits all these kids and they succeed on that program, then they can move on" (Interview with Barbara, p. 9).

Despite the variety of viewpoints, all participants tended to define assessment in a similar manner. Miriam claimed educators need to ask, "So what are we doing here? What is the plan? How is the education working for him? You need to evaluate if there is a demonstration of student growth commensurate with the established goals" (Interview with Miriam, p. 27). While Alberta Learning set out the goals and measures of success for the regular program students, students with disabilities were assessed according to their individual program plan (IPP) goals (Interview with Julia, p. 7). Walter provided, "These are the goals we set up for the child. He achieved the goals. That's how you measure success" (Interview with Walter, p. 26). In this way, the IPP acted much like a traditional report card or progress report. Alison added, "We tend to set dates that are almost like report card dates so that we formally do that academic review" (Interview with Alison, p. 8). Even when an IPP was not required, the participants explained that any accommodations or modifications would be denoted with an asterisk on the common report card. Betty was of the opinion, "It will just be a matter of time before Alberta Learning comes up with a way to test our special needs kids" (Interview with Betty, p. 13).

Many of the participants expressed concerns about the impact of provincial achievement testing. It was suggested that because achievement exams focused on curricular goals, they forced a group teaching model (Interview with Miriam, p. 16). According to Miriam, many teachers were torn between "what they should be doing" to prepare for achievement exams and "what they are or are not doing" in their classrooms. She claimed, "Differentiation takes your focus away" while a "traditional focus limits needs-based assessment and self-paced learning" (Interview with Miriam, p. 16). Barbara worried that achievement testing was "extremely stressful" for the Integrated Occupations Program students expected to write the Grade 9 achievement exam, since they "followed a different program" (Interview with Barbara, p. 12). Walter claimed, "From a statistical viewpoint, we probably do very poorly but, I don't think you can measure a student as successful just because they got a seven on their exam" (Interview with Walter, p. 26).

Beyond the traditional paper and pencil academic assessments, every participant touched on the need to be more cognizant of all students' social-emotional and behavioural growth. Janice stated:

> For students with disabilities, I would go right to the social successes. Are they isolated at lunch time? Are they talking with a group of kids? Are they feeling good about coming to school? Are they feeling good about themselves? Do they define themselves as a [school team member]? Do they feel free to participate in whatever is going on, you know, to come out and cheer or belong to a team or come to a dance or stand in the line-up in the cafeteria. (Interview with Janice, p. 13)

Andrew suggested, "It's the day to day subjective assessment that counts." He believed "teachers need to focus on the soft-skills" (Interview with Andrew, p. 6). Patricia and Allan were the only participants who emphasized the importance of considering emotional intelligence in student assessment although many others alluded to it by way of example (Waxvine Interview, p. 11).

Positive Outcomes

For Staff – Almost every participant identified at least some positive outcomes of inclusion for the involved staff, regular and special needs students. While some of the outcomes appeared to be relevant across the majority of inclusive contexts, others were situational, in that the outcomes related specifically to one context.

According to the inclusive minded administrators, inclusion based programs resulted in an *improved overall support structure for staff since there was an emphasis on collaboration, communication* and *continuity*. Julia described the support structure within Browallia Community School and concluded:

> It's awesome for me being a beginning teacher. Sometimes I don't know where to begin so I have to look to the others for support ... the staff out here are very teamwork oriented. Inclusion works when there is support for teachers. (Interview with Julia, p. 11)

Miriam added, "Sometimes inclusion brings a teacher aide into the classroom and depending on what the needs of that child are, sometimes that teacher aide support can be shared and everyone can profit from having them be a part of it" (Interview with Miriam, p. 22).

Alison voiced the thoughts of many teachers when she suggested, "You get to know the kids better, you have more flexibility, you can be more creative" in an inclusive classroom (Interview with Alison. p. 13). Given that inclusion emphasized programming based on student need, many of the teachers mentioned they experienced the freedom of "individualization." They talked about *thematic planning, project approaches and multi-*

levelled assignments which allowed students choice and resulted in a climate which encouraged all students "to be the best that you can be" (Interview with Julia, p. 8).

A number of participants commented on the fact that the school and classroom climate was impacted greatly. Kerri affirmed, "That is one of the things I really enjoy about inclusion" (Interview with Kerri, p. 4). She believed an inclusive climate improved staff morale because everyone "worked together for the benefit of all the kids" (p. 3). Brad claimed the result of providing an inclusive environment was "a community of responsible, accountable, citizens" (Interview with Brad, p. 3). An observation of Brad's school substantiated this point. "There appears to be absolutely no goofing off in any of the pod's common areas. Students are focused and working" (Browallia Observation, p. 3). Kerri added, "I think you will see that in the hallways as well. I mean, literally, students out there are not there just to visit and if a staff member sees someone that needs help, they stop and help them" (Interview with Kerri, p. 3).

Marjorie touched on the issue of staff morale when she chronicled the pressures from the central office administration (Interview with Marjorie, p. 20). She claimed the Director of Student Services forced a certain model of interaction for students when he questioned her unorthodox solution for providing an equitable situation for the teaching assistants in her building. Marjorie felt strongly that it was most beneficial for all involved to have two teaching assistants working with one severe student and reorganized the teaching assistant time to reflect 31 hours a week at a TA1 rate. She asked,

> Do you realize that these people are never going to come to you with a grievance. They see that we are trying to work it so that it serves them, so it is never going to end up in a grievance. "Well somebody brought that up at the last meeting. If you are going to pay your TAs for an extra hour, then people are going to talk." And I just think to myself, well shame! Shame on the administrators in the other buildings for not figuring out a way to keep their people happy. (Interview with Marjorie, p. 21)

Furthermore, Marjorie described the flexibility that resulted when all staff believed in the importance of providing programming based on student need rather than being locked into the traditional grading system.

> In the beginning we say, "Who are the people who we could most help," and so one teacher will say, "I know he's in Grade 6 but he could come to Grade 4 for this because he fits in really well." Two weeks ago, we got a little foster girl. She's in Grade 3. She's reading at a Grade 1 level. She can't do most of the work in Grade 3. She's already failed twice, or once at least, and this Grade 2 teacher came to me one day and said, "You know, I'm taking some kids out for a literacy initiative and that little girl would fit in here just beautifully. The things she needs are at the same level as these struggling Grade 2s." (Interview with Marjorie, p. 15)

Marjorie believed, in an inclusive learning community where all staff have a vested interest in the needs of all students, there is a common concern on the part of all staff. The result, she claimed, "You've got the scope to provide programs based only on student need" (Interview with Marjorie, p. 17).

Finally, many of the participants agreed with Marjorie, that "student growth over time is hugely rewarding" (Interview with Marjorie, p. 10). They used phrases like *I wish I would have had a video with this kid; you should have seen him; he just keeps getting better and better; he can make it through the day now and that is hugely rewarding* and so on. Miriam and Walter both observed that successes for special needs students were analogous to "baby steps." Miriam said, "each small step is a reason to celebrate" (Interview with Miriam, p. 20).

For Students – Interestingly, many of the positive outcomes identified for students pertained both to regular program and special needs students. One of the goals of inclusion was that all students experience a sense of *belonging, connectedness and community within their learning environment*. The Browallia and Dusty Miller Community Schools claimed they had been successful in creating communities where all students *have a place; belong; are a part of the social community* and *are valued and respected.*

Although this was often "a given" for regular program students, the inclusion of special needs students occasionally improved the social situation and acceptance for regular program students as well. To illustrate, Marjorie provided:

> You've got the scope for peer relations that are not age dependent. So the junior high aged autistic boy can play with the Grade 4s and then a couple of the other junior highs that are not really comfortable with their peers will go down and join that group too. So there are more possibilities – kids can play at different levels. (Interview with Marjorie, p. 17)

An account taken from the town hall meeting conducted in Paperflower School Division emphasized the positive impact of inclusion at the community level.

> When my autistic son started in the school system, he was segregated ... My concern, as a parent, is that it took him one and a half hours to ride the bus to his school. And the important part, I think as special needs ... is the community. You know my son couldn't go across the street or visit anybody that was in his school program. So bringing him into the community has made it a situation where he can go, you know, I can drive him to a friends and he gets to know the people that are in his community. This is where he lives. This is his reality. It's not just the education part that is important. (Town Hall Meeting, p. 11)

Andrew explained, for this particular student, bringing him into the learning community "has made him really popular. He just invited eight of the children from the regular program to his birthday party. These children are on the playground together. They ride the bus together. They play sports together" (Interview with Andrew, p. 15).

Kerri, Julia and Rick provided many stories where the result for students was that they were *much more caring and sensitive and thoughtful.* Kerri claimed that inclusive contexts provided students with "a chance to practice being accepting and being tolerant and understanding that people come from different places" (Interview with Kerri, p. 4). Julia perceived, "At first there was a sense in the class of injustice. 'Oh this isn't fair. He can't get away with that'" (Interview with Julia, p. 8). She believed this was a wonderful opportunity to talk to the kids about equity and fairness. "It's important for all kids to learn, to be treated fairly does not necessarily mean equally because everyone has different needs. Different learning needs require different things" (p. 8).

Patricia stressed that inclusive contexts allowed students to experience success in a variety of ways, often beyond the academic success that has traditionally been the focus. She stood with many of her colleagues when she suggested that the inclusive movement has increased the importance of recognizing multiple intelligence, emphasizing citizenship and encouraging global skill development. Kerri provided:

> When I see individual kids that are being very helpful, very good role models, I recognize them in class and on an individual basis. I want all students to feel positive about being in the classroom, to feel that they are a valued member and that they can contribute. And when the regular program students realize that the

> expectation is for each individual to demonstrate some growth based on their individual program, their individual needs, then they make a space for that person to work in, then it's normal. (Interview with Kerri, p. 10)

Finally, Marjorie and Andrew had observed that there are "some kids that don't believe they can learn, but are bright. They don't have the confidence in themselves as learners" and so when they are given an "an opportunity to assist and support the other students, they start to see success and for some kids that is all they need" (Interview with Marjorie, p. 13). Miriam also claimed, "Children who aren't successful academically or even socially are sometimes pleased to have a responsibility to assist the others" (Interview with Miriam, p. 22).

Negative Outcomes

For Staff – Amidst the descriptions of inclusion, there was also an obvious downside for many of the participants. They described a variety of issues and problems resulting from inclusion. Among their concerns were the negative impacts of inclusion for educators, regular and special needs students.

Many of the administrators commented on the fact that forcing an inclusive model resulted in anger and hostility from staff. To illustrate, Miriam provided:

> I would like them all to have an inclusive mindset but that's not the case. Each staff member comes with their different perspectives and the higher up you go in the grade levels, the more rigid the staff becomes in terms of, "I have this curriculum to teach here. If the child isn't prepared to be in here, to take that curriculum, then they shouldn't be in here. They should be someplace else taking a curriculum that is appropriate for them to take." (Interview with Miriam, p. 25)

Recognizing that *everyone has a different comfort zone,* the administrators suggested *you need to move slowly into inclusion*, especially when you have a *long time settled staff.* Alison described the debate that had taken place within her school and suggested that the staff were "tired of bandwagon changes. If we thought it would make a difference, we would make a change" (Interview with Alison, p. 13).

Every participant identified issues and challenges that resulted from attempting inclusion. The data revealed an extensive list of inadequate resources and supports. Without these resources and supports, the participants claimed *it doesn't work; it's* *increasingly stressful; somebody is losing out and usually it is the regular program kids* and so on. Miriam stated, "We have had enough to do, just to keep a severe student from screaming and throwing himself on the ground. It's our first year of having him here in this school and mostly we are just trying to cope with him ourselves" (Interview with Miriam, p. 8). A few participants insinuated they felt somewhat threatened (e.g., "a slight on my professionalism) by the increasing demands.

Alison raised a number of pertinent questions that resulted from the issues and challenges. She questioned whether it was right for a classroom teacher to include students when "she just doesn't have the skills. She spent half of her time running back and forth to the language arts teacher just to figure things out" (Interview with Alison, p.13). Alison recognized that teachers in junior and senior high school tended to be "specialists" and as such, was it reasonable to "expect them to know it all?" (p. 4). Moreover, she doubted it was possible for teachers to find time to locate, evaluate and modify resources.

> I am thinking of this day in social studies. The teacher said, "I need resources that are close to what we are doing so that this kid can read them silently while the rest are reading silently and can feel that they're being a part of the classroom setting." And that the materials are close, right? Well we really struggled with the resources and all we needed to do was to have the time to find resources. We actually sent a TA over to the Elementary School, pulled some stuff from there and the public library, so you get a unit together for that child. And so next year when that comes along, you've got that one unit, but you might have a different student with different needs. It takes time to prepare all of them and to get things that are parallel at all different levels; well the challenges are LARGE! (Interview with Alison, p. 4)

Alison jokingly inquired, "It would be ideal to have a master teacher to assist classroom teachers. Looking for a job?" (p. 4).

Betty claimed that many of the responsibilities traditionally associated with the special education teacher or coordinator had been downloaded onto the classroom teacher's or administrator's portfolio. She observed that teachers and administrators were *stretched to the max, have no special ed. background* and *feel pressured [because] there's just not enough time*. As well, many administrators noted that they had "inherited the staffing equation" and were challenged to coordinate the variety of perspectives and ways of doing things. Betty claimed, "The reality is that somebody has still got to do all the special ed. stuff" (Interview with Betty, p. 7).

Finally, many of the participants talked about their frustrations with the politics of inclusion and the cost of providing inclusive programs. They described scenarios that highlighted the controversial role of the provincial government in the day to day practical decision-making within schools. The concerns that resulted from the current financial situation were reflected in the comments: *we are limited, we would if we could, it costs too much,* etc. As well, almost every participant spoke negatively about the required funding paperwork needed to obtain resources and supports for special needs students. There was a general consensus that the current IPP requirements were costly in terms of the time required to prepare them, monitor and update them, as well as the time this process took away from students. Barbara claimed:

> I think our special ed. teacher's time is far better spent with students rather than having to do reams of paperwork. The IPP is something to justify, and I'm not sure who that someone is, to justify this alternate program. I think there has got to be another way that we can do that. (Interview with Barbara, p. 9)

For Students – For regular program and special needs students alike, a number of negative outcomes were identified. Many of the participants commented on the fact that placement in the regular classroom does not guarantee that an appropriate program is being provided for either the regular program students or the identified special needs students. Frequently, the participants asserted, *the teacher's attention and time is divided between the needs of the individual and the needs of the group; the dilemma between a curricular focus and a needs based focus, the demands of individualizing and differentiating instruction, etc.* Furthermore, many teachers *lack the skills and abilities, have a negative attitude or opposing mindset and are limited by inadequate resources and supports, overly large class sizes and so on.* Whatever the case may be, more than half of the teachers claimed they had difficulty providing for all students in the regular classroom, all of the time.

In addition, the current process of assessment and labelling in order to secure additional funding was occasionally seen as a needless and stressful situation for students.

In some cases, "lower end" students were assessed and identified in order to obtain funding when it may not have been in their best interest. As well, Allan and Patricia indicated that the provincial government required ongoing testing and assessments (i.e., every three years) in order to justify accommodations on examinations, etc. In scenarios where the student no longer qualified for funding, Allan wondered if it was in "the child's best interest" to all of a sudden withdraw the services or accommodations the student had become accustomed to (Waxvine Interview, p. 7).

A third negative outcome resulted from including students with negative or disrupting behaviours. Across the board, the participants argued that the regular classroom was not an appropriate placement for all students all of the time. Specifically, the participants were concerned about the impact of including severe students (i.e., students with behaviour disorders, emotional disorders or extreme physical care needs) and related it to the issue of balance (i.e., balancing the needs of the individual and the needs of the group). Generally, the participants suggested that the negative impact of including severe students outweighed the benefits of citizenship (i.e., tolerance and the acceptance of diversity). At the same time, they questioned the value for many of the special needs students and wondered if severe students might be better off in an alternate placement.

In addition, all of the participants recommended that while the inclusion of special needs students may be successful in the primary years, it was likely to be much less successful by the time these students reached junior and senior high school. As Walter described:

> The difference between a Grade 1 child and the severe Grade 1 child isn't that big. I mean the differences are there and they are obvious but everyone can cope. The difference between a Grade 6 child and a 12 year old severe special needs child is huge and the older they get, the bigger that gap gets in terms of how do you handle the academic, the physical, the social needs? (Interview with Walter, p. 3)

A number of participants commented on the physical care needs for students of high need. Severe students often needed *wheelchairs, standing frames, physiotherapy* *equipment, feeding equipment, etc.* that required a great deal of additional physical space. Kerri recognized for one student:

> His needs are not physical but he needs a significant amount of physical space within the classroom that enables him to live out. We find that there are distractions and so we have him as far removed from the pathways and others as possible. I mean he is in the corner of the room and his individual needs can be better met there because of his differences. (Interview with Kerri, p. 4)

Janice concluded, the reality is in our classrooms of 30, to add another adult body in there … you get the goldfish bowl syndrome. I mean this person is in there to help and there is no room to breathe" (Interview with Janice, p. 12).

Finally, according to Janice, "a stressed teacher is an ineffective teacher" (Interview with Janice, p. 9). Barbara explained how, in a homogeneous class, "I find that my lines are just so relaxed. I can discuss with them and have fun with them." When several special needs students were placed in her classroom, she noticed:

> There is a constant unrest. Since the second semester, I had two of the behavioural types who just really didn't want to be here so they were pulling apart the program. They are gone now and what a difference it makes. There is just no comparison. Some of these others that are kind of borderline, well the behaviour guys are encouraging the borderline kids. I was worn out trying to settle down these other guys. Now the borderline guys can't get away with it because it is more manageable. (Interview with Barbara, pp. 11 -12)

Success Stories

The following success stories provide support for the value of inclusive education. The general assumption in research is that researchers do not allow their interpretations to colour what they observe. Although it was not completely possible for me to leave my own perceptions at the classroom door, there is value in sharing the experiences of others. The participants in this study were in an excellent position to help us understand, not only the problems, challenges and issues resulting from inclusive programs, but also, the possibilities within inclusive education.

Out on Bus Supervision

from an Interview with Janice (pp. 16 – 17)

> This school has had such successes with handicapped kids. I think of the bus supervision at the end of the day and I think of this one young man who is finished now.

He chose not to come back this year. We would have had him back, mostly, on a work experience kind of a program and then he could have been included in graduation. But no, he only finished 11 years of schooling. So we invited him as a guest to graduation. His parents looked into the college programs and have chosen not to put him there because of the isolation he might feel – that he might get the idea that he is somehow different because he would be with a whole bunch of other handicapped kids and he's never had that. He doesn't ever see himself as being different enough to go into a transitional vocational program at the college.

So we're out on bus supervision, talking about, "What on earth do I drive Fords for anyway," and you know, he's just with the crew, just with his friends and that is typical here. Even some of your really difficult to deal with young ladies in Grade 9 say, "Yeah, come. Come be with us." The kids are just great. They are accepting. He belongs and it's normal.

From the Beginning
from an Interview with Julia (pp. 5 – 10)

We got one new student this year who was a real behaviour problem. When he came into the classroom, there was a sense in the class of injustice. "Oh, this isn't fair. He can get away with this. How come he can do that?" But we had the opportunity to talk with the kids about that and say, "All right. Everyone has different needs, different learning needs and maybe some of them show on the outside, others maybe we see it more on the inside." And it was really good because the kids had a chance to think about that and they realized, If I'm going to help Joey over here in math, then Tommy can't get mad because he is doing fine. If Tommy needs the help, then we'll be there for him and he might be struggling in these other areas and then, we'll help him there. So the kids are learning that.

With this one behaviour student, we had everybody involved from the beginning. We had the parents, all of his teachers, the principal, our school counsellor, the social worker was present and we were all able to have some input and to contribute to his Individual Program Plan. ... It's very team oriented – we keep everybody informed.

So at the beginning of the year, this particular student pretty much isolated himself because he had such tremendous difficulty with relationships. But now, he is part of a peer group. I mean, sometimes he struggles with that and he'll lose a friend or something like that because he is not approaching the situation appropriately, but generally, he is getting friends, he's involved in groups, he's playing with kids at recess. It was a growing thing. Kids are accepting.

I think kids are often afraid of adults too for that matter. We are afraid of what we don't understand and so just gaining a new understanding of "All right, this is where he's at, this is where you are at and that's okay. We can still find common ground."

And although the other kids in this school are pretty accepting, their acceptance of this particular student depends on their level of awareness too. They might think he's just a regular kid that annoys them sometimes on the playground or "Whoa! He's swearing. Why?" Because they are not in my classroom they may not recognize that he's got a special problem in that area. So it might be difficult at first but as the year goes on, they generally find out about it. Kids can be cruel but they can be really accepting too.

So he's doing amazingly well in this classroom, in this school. It's his first time, actually, of being in a regular classroom. He's been segregated all along and now he's doing really well. Seeing how far he has come from the first week, feeling totally uncomfortable, distrustful of everyone and everything, he has grown relaxed and he's part of the community now, in the classroom, in the school and in this community. I'm really excited about this one in particular.

You've Got To Believe in Them
from an Interview with Rick (pp. 18 – 19)

I had this one scenario last year where I made a bet with another teacher that this young man was going to make it. As a matter of fact, he's one of my current student's older brothers. I taught him when he was in Grade 6 and he was a different kind of guy. Quite possibly he had the same kinds of problems as his brother in my class now, but maybe not to the same extent. And so I bet this other teacher that he would get into high school and he would do fine and maybe he wouldn't take them on a trip but he would branch away. And the other teacher said, "Nope. No way. That's not going to happen." But I believed in this guy. I thought he had it. We got along fine, I mean, I had to be pretty hot on him all of the time. I hammered him pretty hard but he didn't resent it, he carried on. Anyway, last year this student showed up at my classroom door. I was teaching. He was in his tuxedo - his graduation day. He said, "Mr. Teacher, what are you drinking?" And so I stepped into the hall and I said, "I drink rum." So this young fellow goes down the hall and says to my colleague, "You owe my favourite teacher a bottle of rum. I graduated today and it's thanks to him." So that was a good one.

There was another junior high girl I taught. We fought just, like all the time. She was bad. I mean, she wasn't a very well behaved young lady. And we fought right through junior high. Even when I wasn't her teacher, we continued to argue about different things, trying to work on her behaviour and whatever. Anyway, a number of years after that, I was coaching a ladies ball team and she happened to be playing on the other team. She came up and said, "Hi, how are you?" I asked, "So what are you doing now?" She said, "Actually, I 'm a teacher." Two years after that she taught special education here. And even because we fought, I just didn't like the way the direction she was going, I didn't realize that I had influenced her. She says it did. Maybe she has got a warped memory of what happened, but anyway, she says that the fact that I fought with her so hard, stayed on her case all the time, it showed interest. It showed I cared. And she is an excellent teacher because she's been there. She's been down the rough road and she can really relate to those "at risk" type kids that often get lost. So that was a success story.

We'll Take Them and We'll Try
from an Interview with Marjorie (pp. 11 – 13)

We had one kid come to us from another school. When his school phoned me they said, "Oh my goodness. You guys are in for it with this kid. Three TAs quit over him last year" and stuff like that. He was just not manageable. We had so much success with that kid. We were so sad when he left. There was just no way he could come to school here because his family moved somewhere a long way away. Anyway, we were a little nervous about him at first.

The one student we had that was the most difficult, but even with that one, I mean, we never pulled him or anything. We never sent him away. When his Mom brought him he was six years old. He was fed by a feeding tube. He could see but they didn't, they weren't sure to what extent he could see. They knew there was a partial impairment of his sight, even near blindness. He didn't speak. He needed a wheelchair, or walker, or a person. He couldn't walk well at all. So anyway, his Mom thought his developmental age was something like ten months, or something like that. We were pretty nervous. We were pretty challenged about having this student in our school. And Mom was very hard to deal with because she wanted

> inclusion. I mean, she wanted full inclusion. We said to her, "this student has to be taken out of the room to be fed because it is upsetting to some of the other kids and it's upsetting the routine in the sense that certain things can be going on in the classroom while the kids are having snack or whatever. Like the kids are so involved in that, either interest wise or frightened by it, that it does create a disturbance in the classroom." And so, at first she agreed to it [removing him for feeding] but then she started saying, "Well, I don't see why he has to be taken somewhere else to be fed and I want him in the classroom." You know, that kind of stuff. And it was really tough. There wasn't even physical space in the classroom for it all to happen either. We had a big group in there at the time. But you know, we pursued it as best we could and then, he started getting sick and was in hospital for a long time. Eventually, Mom put him in a special care home or something because it was 24 hour a day care and she just wasn't having a life. In the end, he ceased to be here but not because we gave up on it. The teacher, bless her heart, she took him even though she had a big class. The thing that really came out of that was, you know, of all the discussions I had with the Mom, were about the balance between the rights of the individual and the rights of the class.
>
> It's got to be very case by case. We had this young girl who was EMH and we didn't put her in our junior high modified class because we knew the modifications wouldn't really make that much difference for her and she really didn't want to be in there. So we put her in a regular class and she had an aide most of the time because that was important to her, very important to her. And she knew, for instance, she did not want to have a book if the other kids did not have a book for the test. She was very aware of those kinds of things. And it was important for us to recognize those kinds of needs.

Chapter Summary

The purpose of this chapter was to describe the grounded theory and phenomenological approaches used to analyze the data and to portray inclusion in the middle school years through the participants' perceptions and interpretations, practical experiences, success stories and reflections.

Using analytic induction, constant comparison and typological analysis, the grounded theory approach revealed five main categories as well as a variety of related sub-categories and supporting details. The result was a list of categorical details composed by using the relative and descriptive words and phrases from the participants' own words.

The phenomenological approach was then used to go beyond the list of categorical details in order to recreate the full picture of inclusion in the middle school years. The data were analyzed a second time and the resulting themes and categories that emerged were related to the three subsidiary research questions. Five categories emerged from the data on the definitions of inclusion; five categories resulted from the data on inclusion in practice and; three categories were identified from the data on success in inclusion. The chapter concluded with four success stories that illustrate the possibilities for students with disabilities in inclusive schools.

CHAPTER 5

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The main purpose of this study was to explore the perceptions of educators working in Alberta middle schools to determine how they understood and experienced inclusion in their small corner of the world in the year 2001. Data were gathered using semi-structured interviews, observations and follow-up conversations. Seventeen participants (i.e., administrators, special education coordinators, counsellors, teachers and teaching assistants) were selected from a reputational sample that represented seven schools within four rural school divisions.

Following the approach used by Crossman (1996), I used both grounded theory and phenomenology to analyze and categorize the data. Chapter 4 detailed Cohen, Manion, and Morrison's (2000) procedural tools for analyzing qualitative data and identified the categories, sub-categories and typologies that were revealed by the analysis. The phenomenological approach provided the descriptive storyline of inclusion in Alberta middle schools. In keeping with qualitative research methods, the perceptions and interpretations, images, scenarios, stories and experiences were presented, as much as possible, in the participants' words. This methodological approach resulted in a thorough, detailed and descriptive portrait of inclusion in Alberta.

This chapter will provide a comparison of the research findings as they relate to the findings in the literature. As well, it was anticipated that this study would determine why some schools were successfully including students with disabilities while others were not. Thus, through this comparative analysis, the factors that facilitate or inhibit successful inclusion will be identified.

Defining Inclusion

Participants in this study defined inclusion using the terms *inclusion, inclusive education, inclusive programming, mainstreaming and integration.* The terms were used interchangeably and, for the most part, described a common set of characteristics. Like

Willis (2000), I discovered there appeared to be "a high level of consistency among participants in their understanding of inclusive education, evidenced by similarities in the characteristics that they attributed to inclusion and commonalities among examples of inclusive practices within schools and individual classrooms" (p. 139).

Generally, the participants agreed that inclusion was defined by the following four common characteristics: a) placement of all students in the regular, home or community school, b) in the regular classroom, c) with appropriate programming, accommodations or modifications and d) with the required resources and supports. An important finding for this research was that the participants' interpretation of inclusion was broader based than the definition provided as a basis for understanding in Chapter 1. For the purpose of this research, the following definition of inlcusion was used as a basis of understanding.

> Providing to all students, including those with significant disabilities, equitable opportunities to receive effective educational services, with the needed supplementary aids and support services, in age-appropriate classrooms in their neighborhood schools, in order to prepare students for productive lives as full members of society. (NCERI, 1995)

In addition to the common characteristics the participants described the basic philosophical underpinnings of inclusion; highlighted the need to value individual perspectives and move toward collaborative relationships; identified a variety of barriers to inclusion; emphasized the importance of collaborative administrative decision-making; discussed the importance of re-conceptualizing teaching and assessment practices; recognized the impact of changing role responsibilities and the need to actively involve parents as partners in inclusive education. From the participants' perspective the "practical, day to day reality" of inclusion in Alberta middle schools differed substantially from the "theoretical ideal" presented in the literature.

Characteristics of Inclusion

As was mentioned previously, there were four commonly accepted characteristics of inclusion identified by the participants in this research study. These characteristics were also identified in the research conducted by Capper et al., 2000; Elliot & McKenney, 1998;

Ferguson & Ferguson, 1998; Fuchs & Fuchs, 1998; Grenot-Scheyer et al., 2001; Rogers, 1998; Wade, 2000; Willis, 2000; and Yell, 1998.

Neighbourhood School – The four school divisions selected to participate in this study all supported inclusion in that they provided policy that specified, "The very first place we look for providing educational programs to students is in their neighbourhood school" (Town Hall Meeting Interview, p. 6). Given this philosophically and policy-based starting point, an interesting finding was that in all four school divisions, from the central office downward, the traditional dual-track system was maintained through the implementation of district and school-based segregated special education programs. This finding was consistent with the work of Lipsky and Gartner (1998) who found that inclusive programs and whole school approaches for inclusion do exist and yet in many cases, inclusive education has failed at the district level. Marjorie suggested that while "the policy holds the possibility there, both for the parent and for the school administrator to consider students being in the home school, the policy is lived out by the actual day to day practice in schools" (Interview with Marjorie, p. 2).

Regular Class with Age Appropriate Peers – The majority of participants in this study defined inclusion by suggesting that "all students" would be placed in the regular classroom with age appropriate peers. This was consistent with the findings in Grenot-Scheyer et al. (2001), Hunt (1992) and Willis (2000). However, these findings clearly illustrated a discrepancy between the theoretical placement (i.e., "what should be done") and the practical placement (i.e., "what is being done") of students with disabilities. This research study revealed, in all but one school, students with disabilities were placed in a variety of settings from complete segregation to full inclusion.

At first glance, one might conclude that the majority of schools were not providing inclusive placements for students. However, these findings articulated differences between each school's version of inclusive education. Like Willis (2000), I discovered, "Inclusion for these participants means more than the mere physical presence of students with disabilities in the regular classroom" (p. 88). The majority of participants mentioned the need to include students with disabilities in the overall learning community where all of the stakeholders worked together to accept and involve all students in a variety of ways. Thus, while placement in the regular classroom was one characteristic of inclusion, the greater vision extended beyond the classroom to the overall learning community within the school and, in some cases, to the neighbouring or local community.

Marjorie provided an example of appropriate programming from an "entire staff approach" for a student with autism.

> I'm thinking of one junior high boy, in particular, who was very needy and the teachers would, on some days, get to the point where they didn't have the energy to deal with him so they would send him down here, to the office. And the next thing you know, the secretary would have that kid in her office and she would have cajoled and coaxed until that kid would be willing to try and do his assignment on the computer, which meant of course, she couldn't do her work. And I would walk by and he would be smiling and yelling at her, but he was working. And she would have that kid in her office all afternoon if that's what it takes. (Interview with Marjorie, p. 9)

From this perspective, the interpretation of inclusion extended beyond individual classroom walls and was carried out through a "whole school approach."

Appropriate Programming – According to Wade (2000), "Curricular and instructional approaches that promote the active, social construction of knowledge, that are interactive, experimental and inquiry based and that provide guided instruction have been recommended in the literature as ways to include and motivate students who traditionally have been excluded from success in the mainstream" (p. 8). The participants in the study provided a similar list of inclusive teaching strategies and methods, indicating that educators were acutely aware of the need to use a variety of curricular and instructional approaches. Even so, the transition from "knowing what the methods are" to "knowing how to use them" was a difficult step for many of the participants. Miriam provided an example that illustrated this problem.

> We provided our Grade 5 teacher with the time for her to leave the school to go to the Kindergarten to collect developmentally appropriate activities for a little fellow in her class because primarily, the teacher aide had been doing the delivery. Now, did that automatically translate into a meaningful, in-class program for that child?

> Probably not. Sending her to a workshop or a course or something, cannot be viewed as a quick fix. These things take time. (Interview with Miriam, p. 15)

These issues will be discussed in more detail under the section entitled *Barriers to Inclusion* presented later in this chapter. Generally, however, the participants expressed concerns with their abilities to provide appropriate programs for all students and revealed a continuum of readiness or comfort levels.

Required Resources and Supports – Of all the critical elements identified by the participants in this study the need to provide appropriate resources and supports was the most resounding. The loudest call for resources and supports came from participants working in the schools moving toward inclusion. Like Clough (1998), I found,

> What chiefly distinguished [the most inclusive school in the study from the others] was that it put its money – and considerably more of it – where its mouth was, and whilst all four ... demonstrated vigorously written and stated policies, the most successful school's were more visibly enacted. Resources were clearly attached to the development of supportive structures, for both students and staff. (p. 12)

The consequences of not providing sufficient resources and supports surfaced as anger (resulting from the perceived lack of control), confusion (resulting from the inconsistencies or mixed messages from the provincial government, within school divisions and within schools), frustration (resulting from the implications of inclusion for teaching practice), resentment (about the current fiscal situation) and a perceived helplessness (arising from the impact of change). In Johnny Jump-up High School, for example, the participants claimed it had become an "extreme condition" (Interview with Janice, p. 18).

In schools where the inclusive community was thriving and the qualities and beliefs of inclusive schools were in place, there was evidence to support the work of Grenot-Scheyer et al. (2001) who claimed, "The participants had built on what existed 'naturally' within their communities" (p. 10). Marjorie talked at length about the importance of coming to the learning community as the "whole person with all of the skills, understandings and feelings you have as a human being." She claimed, "If you come in that way, if you have that kind of a staff, then you have nothing to be afraid of because you … have all the resources you need" (Interview with Marjorie, p. 10).

Even though Marjorie's staff had somehow found a way to go beyond the list of material, human and financial resources, identified both within the literature and by the majority of participants in this study, it was an undisputed finding that inclusion must be supported. Julia stated it quite succinctly when she said, "Inclusion works when there is support for teachers" (Interview with Julia, p. 11).

Underpinnings of Inclusion

Inclusive models of education have been available for decades and yet, the most recent research on inclusion suggests "it has become the preferred model for students with disabilities" within the last ten years (Capper et al., 2000; Grenot-Scheyer et al., 2001; and Wade, 2000). In 1993, Alberta's Department of Learning put into place policy that stated, "Educating students with special needs in regular classrooms in neighbourhood or local schools shall be the first placement option considered by school boards, in consultation with students, parents/guardians and school staff" (Policy 1.6.1). The findings of this research highlighted the fact that many educators have only recently come to grips with the impact of inclusive education for themselves, their students and for their practice. Barbara, a teacher in Johnny Jump-up High School, indicated, "When I came here in '90, that was the year they shut down the special school and then we had some very severe kids." Since then, Barbara had observed that the needs of students in the regular classroom had really changed (Interview with Barbara, p. 9). Miriam pointed out, "Our special needs school closed 13 years ago so our teachers who have been teaching for 25 years in junior high and high school have only in the last few years, started to receive special needs children" (Interview with Miriam, p. 26).

Even so, Miriam pointed out there was some precedent both within policy and the law for educators to decide on the most appropriate placement for students with disabilities. Under the Alberta School Act , Section 29, school boards are given the authority to determine whether or not a student is in need of a special education program. The appropriate identification and assessment of the student, obtaining parental consent and the availability of the required resources and supports were to be considered as factors in the board's decision to provide special education programming (Guide to Special Education, 1997, p. GD.3).

The debate on the merits and pitfalls of the inclusive movement, highlighted by these research findings was also addressed by Barnett and Monda-Amaya (1998), Beninghof (1996), Fox andYsseldyke (1997), Korinek, et al. (1999) and Rogers (1993). Messrs et al. (1994) went so far as to say:

> To consider oneself an inclusionist is to place a philosophy before the needs of children. It is not much different from a mechanic telling a customer what work needs to be done on a car before even examining it. Furthermore, should inclusion for all students with special needs be mandated, it would return education to roughly the same state as during the 1950s, when options for students with special needs were extremely limited. Full inclusion, in which the regular education teacher must learn a monumental number of additional skills in order to deal with both special and regular education students, may be state-of-the-art education for the Nineties – that is, the 1890s. All that is needed is to mix grade levels and you would have an ideal job description for a Victorian "school marm." (p. 38)

Other writers (Capper et al., 2000; Ferguson & Ferguson, 1998; Guetzloe, 1999; Grenot-Scheyer et al., 2001 and Landers & Weaver, 1997) recommend that inclusion requires an individual and collective commitment among all education professionals, families and the community toward ownership of all students, an attitude of unqualified acceptance and the fostering of student growth at any level, a collaborative model as well as changes in teaching, practice, curriculum and assessment.

The educators within Browallia and Dusty Miller Community School had found ways to achieve these ideals. Each inclusive school was a unique manifestation of the values and inclusive philosophy, the collaborative culture and structure created by the committed, caring community of educators, parents and students within each school community. According to Grenot-Scheyer et al. (2001), "It is only from this viewpoint that inclusion is seen as a 'new vision' of what is best for all students" (p. 2).

Grenot-Scheyer and her colleagues identified seven critical values they believed were "necessary to ensure the optimal development of second generation inclusive schools." (pp. 5 – 7). This list of critical values has been repeated here because there was evidence in these research findings to support them.

Inclusion and School Renewal are Linked – Amidst the stories and responses regarding inclusion a few of the participants recognized the potential for meaningful renewal and change. Marjorie provided a wealth of stories from her 30 years of experience, illustrating the positive outcomes for all involved stakeholders. She held a position similar to Grenot-Scheyer et al. (2001), who suggested that "meaningful change in the fabric of schools must come from within schools rather than as a response to external pressures" (p. 5). Allan addressed the impact of policy and the resulting implications for educational practice. He mentioned, "With the new special ed. review that is coming up, things will change" (Interview with Allan, p. 7). Rick was one of the few who claimed teachers "are agents of change. That's what we do" (Interview with Rick, p. 20).

Though the majority of participants supported the conceptual "ideal" and believed it was important to "normalize" education for students with disabilities, at a very basic level there existed a tremendous amount of tension and debate regarding the philosophical and practical implications of inclusion. Alison described how the staff of Johnny Jump-up High School had debated the "pros and cons of both models" in response to the expectations spelled out in their division level policy (Interview with Alison, p. 13). The result was that there was considerable tension from the "long standing staff" who continued to support "the way things have been done around here" (p. 7).

Thus, on the one hand, educators have generally accepted inclusive philosophy as being commonplace in schools. On the other hand, they continue to provide for students using a variety of traditional and exclusionary practices. To illustrate this problem, one of the purposes of the Paperflower School Division town hall meeting was to survey the stakeholders about "the greatest area of need" within the community, in order to get a sense of how they could best provide a segregated or division level program for the identified groups of students (e.g., learning disabilities, behaviour disorders or the gifted and talented). At the same time, the Director of Student Services assured parents and teachers that inclusive education, with the focus on neighbourhood schools, would continue to be of prime importance. This incongruity was mirrored within every school division that participated in this study. The majority of stakeholders representing the parent body clearly requested "choice," meaning they wanted to be given a continuum of options for their children.

Writers and researchers on inclusion have suggested that this dissonance and tension results from opposing perspectives on "how best to meet the needs of all students." Ferguson and Ferguson (1998) argued:

> This constructive tension need not be seen as hopeless contradictions, but rather can be approached as constructive antagonisms that lead to a process for enduring reform. The future of inclusion may not be found in our choice or the choice of others. Instead it may be found in a reflective process of recognizing the true sources of tension among all those advocating for education restructuring and living with the somewhat unpredictable outcomes. (p. 303)

A number of authors on inclusion and the majority of participants in this study concluded there was cause for concern regarding the sustainability of inclusion as it has been typically structured (e.g., Fuchs & Fuchs, 1998; Grenot-Scheyer et al., 2001; Guetzloe, 1999; Messrs et al., 1994; and Stanovich et al., 1998). From these findings, it was clearly evident that the majority of participants cannot continue to function in the "partially inclusive" systems without additional support. In order to experience success, schools must consider a "new vision" and a merger of the two streams (i.e., regular and special education); a shift from a continuum of educational placements to a continuum of educational services and a shift in the role responsibilities of the involved personnel (Grenot-Scheyer et al., 2001; Landers & Weaver, 1997; and Wade, 2000).

Inclusion Presents a Clear and Strong Moral Imperative – Janice voiced the viewpoint of the majority when she said, "I very rarely run into anybody who says these types of kids don't belong" (Interview with Janice, p. 2) The participants' phrases *it's a good thing* and *do the right thing* supported the first of Landers' & Weaver's (1997) six principles of inclusive education: "Inclusion is a value" (p. 15). At the same time, these research findings also confirmed the second principle, "Inclusion is the underlying philosophy by which all students are educated." Students in the Dusty Miller Community School, for example, were seen as valuable members of the overall learning community, regardless of their academic or physical potential. The involved stakeholders had "bought into" the values of inclusion and supported inclusive philosophy. All students benefited from opportunities to share, learn and contribute together within their school and local community.

Like Landers and Weaver (1987), the participants in this study believed in the third principle: "All students have a right to a shared educational experience in their community school, in the regular classroom or in a program suited to their need, with brothers, sisters and peers" (p. 15). In this view, inclusion was a concept, not a "physical place." Marjorie suggested students can be included and be a part of a learning community in a variety of ways and at a variety of levels if inclusion is viewed, conceptually, as a process rather than a geographical placement (Interview with Marjorie, p. 12).

Landers and Weaver's (1987) fourth principle was that the "included students" have the same support needs as when they were not included. This study emphasized the practical reality in many schools where participants struggled to provide for students with disabilities in regular classrooms because the costs associated with providing the same level of support prevented effective inclusive practice.

Important for this study was the finding that the debate regarding inclusion continues to be fuelled by opposing pedagogical perspectives representing conceptual differences between professionals who support the traditional programs and services approach and those who support inclusive schools. Thus, the question posed by the participants in this study was not so much, "Should all students be included?" but rather, "How do we go about including all students?"

The inclusive administrators admitted they hand-picked their staff providing evidence to support the fact that inclusion requires a change in thinking, attitude, skill and ability. The participants comments: *you can't force them, it's hard to move them, you need consistency, etc*. revealed the difficulty of "moving toward inclusion" with a staff at varying levels of readiness. Inclusive education requires inclusive minded staff.

Second generation inclusionists would recommend we:

> Not be encouraged to return to segregated models of schooling, because the challenges of quality inclusive schooling have not yet been achieved for many children or because many professionals do not yet appear to be ready to pursue those challenges or able to put them into practice even when they are psychologically ready to do so. (Grenot-Scheyer et al., 2001, p. xvii)

Janice's heartfelt statement, "I would hate to see us throw out the inclusion baby with the bath water and all that jazz" indicated that for some of the participants inclusive models were worth the investment (Interview with Janice, p. 17).

Learning and Belonging Happen Together – Grenot-Scheyer et al. (2001) stated, "It has long been known that there is an inextricable relationship among learning, caring and belonging." Thus, one might conclude that the first job of the school should be to educate children not only for competence but for caring and concern. The findings from this research study revealed a tremendous amount of caring and concern on the part of the education professionals involved, regardless of their preferred philosophical orientation or pedagogical practice (i.e., traditional or inclusive).

Interestingly, it was the participants in the inclusive schools or classrooms who mentioned the importance of the acceptance and tolerance of diversity; suggested we belong together; described the impact on the classroom climate where students were much more caring and sensitive and thoughtful and focused on the importance of citizenship, equity and fairness. Generally, the participants believed, like Kohn (1991), that "the school should go beyond producing good learners and should embrace the responsibility of producing good people" (cited in Grenot-Scheyer et al., 2001, p. 6).

Access, Equity and Support are Critical – The findings of this study highlighted the participants' concern over the interpretation of "all students" and their "ability to provide an appropriate program for all students." The literature suggests that "students with disabilities should have access to the core curriculum, which represents a culturally approved set of knowledge or skills" and that this should be achieved within the regular classroom (Grenot-Scheyer et al., 2001, p. 6). Only four of the 17 participants believed this was an achievable ideal. The remaining 13 participants indicated that all students could be provided with equitable learning opportunities, have access to the core curriculum and be provided with the requisite supports through a continuum of programming options. As well, these participants provided numerous examples to support their belief that the regular classroom was not an appropriate placement for all students (i.e., severe students and behavioural disabilities).

Julia had observed similar results to those provided by Stanovich et al. (1998). These authors discovered:

> Peer acceptance of ... students with disabilities, who are educationally at risk or for whom English is a second language is not automatically helped by the practice of inclusion. Perhaps because students with disabilities (most of whom have high incidence disabilities such as learning disabilities and hence, are very similar in profile to the children who are academically at risk) have had their educational problems officially identified and labeled, they are receiving differential feedback from their teachers and the other adults in the educational settings that they inhabit. Perhaps because of the label, teachers are giving students with disabilities the benefit of the doubt (i.e., not 'blaming' them for their educational struggles) or are more conscious of the need to provide positive reinforcement for trying and for making improvements, no matter how small. Conversely, however, the label may be having deleterious effects on their social integration in the classroom. (p. 125)

Julia commented on the impact of labelling and suggested that it was the teacher's responsibility to teach students that "everyone has different learning needs [because] we are all wired differently. Kids need to think about [the fact] that we treat all kids fairly but, not necessarily equally, because of the different learning needs" (Interview with Julia, p. 8). She claimed in her classroom, "Kids just accept that and are used to it. It's just normal" (p. 5).

The issue of support was analogous to flogging a dead horse. Throughout the literature and within these research findings, there was an overwhelming amount of emphasis placed on the need to allocate sufficient resources to the inclusive process, yet the reality in almost every case was that inclusive models were not adequately supported.

Fullan and Miles (1992) noted that school change is "resource hungry" (cited in Fox & Ysseldyke, 1997, p. 95). One of the many rationales provided for the inability to provide additional support was the current situation of fiscal restraint. For the participants in this study, financial restraint was identified as a real-life barrier to inclusion. In fact, these findings supported the findings of many writers and researchers (Barnett & Monda-Amaya, 1998; Fox & Ysseldyke, 1997; Johnson, 1999; Larrivee et al., 1997; and Messrs et al., 1994) who found that inclusion is not cheaper. In her own Master's research, Miriam discovered, "It is about one third to two thirds more expensive to provide for the needs in the mainstream" (Interview with Miriam, p. 11).

Some of the costs of inclusion, such as the cost involved in teacher training and professional development, could be expected to diminish over time. Others (e.g., contracted support services) could be expected to be more long lasting. According to the researchers and writers in this area, it seems reasonable to speculate that "there is some minimum, critical level of resources necessary for the success of inclusion" (Landers & Weaver, 1997, p. 45). Fox and Ysseldyke (1997) reported that schools needed to "tailor their model to the available resources within the district" (p. 95). According to Barbara, the "biggest cost of inclusion" (i.e., time to write IPPs, time to individualize, time to manage behaviour, etc.) was done at the "expense of our regular kids" (Interview with Barbara, p. 8).

Students Learn in Different Ways – Both the findings in literature and this study emphasized the importance of "valuing and respecting individual differences" and "teaching in ways that respect the variety of ways in which students learn and demonstrate their intelligence." Although the majority of participants recognized the importance of differentiating instruction and valued the outcomes of doing so, a considerable number identified pragmatic or attitudinal barriers (e.g., *I don't know how; when do I find the time; I'm not sure it's best, etc.)* which prevented this ideal. The administrators all suggested they placed a tremendous amount of emphasis on professional development in this area, yet stressed, "a course for three days is not going to make the difference" (Interview with Marjorie, p. 6).

Inclusive Education is Beneficial For All Involved – Numerous positive outcomes for all students, teachers and education professionals, parents and the community at large were cited in the literature, many of which were supported by the findings of this research. The findings in the literature claim that inclusive classrooms have a significant effect on student attitudes, interest, productivity, engagement and academic achievement; increased self-esteem and social skills; were unique…and afforded diverse opportunities for learning (Grenot-Scheyer et al., 2001; Korinek et al., 1999; Landers & Weaver, 1997; and Tiechnor et al., 1998). The participants' list of positive outcomes included the following: a *sense of belonging, connectedness and community; increased sensitivity and caring; acceptance of diversity and tolerance of others; experience success in a variety of ways beyond the academic; the opportunity to assist and support others; a focus on multiple intelligence, citizenship and global skill development* and *a sense of justice*. An equally extensive list of positive outcomes were provided for staff: *improved school climate; support structure and staff morale; increased variety of teaching and assessment methods; focus on communication, collaboration* and *continuity*. Thus, every participant recognized the benefits of inclusive programs for students even though they frequently qualified the types of students who would benefit the most from inclusive experiences.

It would be remiss to suggest that the only outcomes described within the literature and within the findings of this research were positive outcomes. Stanovich et al. (1998) discovered that the social and affective goals of inclusion were not automatically promoted by the practice of inclusion. Guetzloe (1999) found little empirical evidence … in terms of the actual gains made in basic skills, social competence or content areas (p. 93). Similarly, the participants in this study described the counterside to inclusion and highlighted a variety of negative outcomes for all students, teachers and education professionals.

Collaboration is Essential – The cornerstone of successful inclusive programs, according to the literature was "the development of a collaborative ethic and shared ownership of all students" (Grenot-Scheyer et al., 2001, p. 7). The results of this research uphold this claim. Many of the participants noted that increased demands placed on classroom teachers as a result of the increased complexity of learners within the classroom, class sizes, professional demands (i.e., shifting role responsibilities) and performance expectations created a situation where it was critical to work collaboratively. The participants who supported inclusion found this to be an easily achieved and beneficial process. The participants who struggled with inclusion described the stress that resulted from collaborative efforts and expectations. Barbara found it to be a slight on her professionalism. Marjorie and Miriam also touched on the value of a collaborative ethic when they suggested that all students, not just students with disabilities, benefited from access to support staff and education specialists.

Valuing Perspectives

Inclusion is a phenomenon that requires change in the way educators consider meeting student needs (Landers & Weaver, 1997, p. 22). These research findings drew attention to the friction between "what has always been" and "what is possible" and highlighted a continuum of perspectives and philosophies. At one end of the continuum, participants challenged the basic philosophical underpinnings of inclusion and questioned its value and purpose. At the other end of the continuum, participants described a variety of creative and innovative methods for moving toward inclusion. Either way, it was clearly evident there was no "right" way to proceed (Grenot-Scheyer et al., 2001, p. 9). Landers and Weaver (1997) quoted Hall (1979) to illustrate:

> Change associated with any innovation entails an unfolding of experience and a gradual development of skill and sophistication in the use of an innovation, [in this case inclusion] and is a developmental process which takes time. (p. 204)

Marjorie argued, the principal must create a community where the concerns of all stakeholders can be shared and valued. She encouraged her staff to participate in the decisions regarding student placement. To illustrate, Marjorie provided the following scenario:

> So if a special needs student were going into Grade 1, I would meet with the teacher and if the teacher says, "You know Marjorie, I've got 31 kids and even though I've got a full-time aide, I've already got six special needs kids in my room. I really don't see how I can handle this even with another aide. We just don't have room in the classroom." Then I would say to the parent, "Is it possible that we could include your child in Kindergarten or could we include your child in the Grade 2 classroom where there are 26 kids? We could put a TA there and the teacher there is quite willing to have your child be a part of that classroom."
>
> If people are in the middle place where they say, "Well I could do it, but, man, I'm dreading it or it would be hard or whatever," then I might say to the teacher, "Well can we set up a conditional thing with the parents where we say we'll try it. And if in fact it is overwhelming for you, then we can give them that feedback," and that way we would not be locked into keeping the child in that placement.
>
> If, on the other end of it, they are at the place where they would say, "You know Marjorie, I'll just quit," then I would have to say to the parents, "I'm sorry but we just can't do it." (Interview with Marjorie, p. 3)

The image that Marjorie painted vividly illustrated how, within one school, the educator's had a variety of readiness levels.

Some, like Kerri, Rick and Julia, were of the opinion that the regular classroom was "a place for all students." Some educators believed the regular classroom was an appropriate placement for some special needs students, but not all students and questioned how to go about providing for the included special needs students. For others, the predominant belief was that "there has got to be another way" (Interview with Barbara, p. 9). Barbara challenged the purpose of inclusion and recommended that educators "realistically look at the needs of kids" (p. 9). She believed strongly that students needs were best met in homogeneous groupings.

The continuum of individual perspectives revealed by the data was really quite astonishing given that there were only 17 participants in this study. Landers and Weaver

(1997) would theorize that each of the above perspectives or readiness levels represents one of Hall's Seven Stages of Concern (p. 23).

Hall's Seven Stages of Concern

- Stage 0 – Awareness
- Stage 1 – Informational
- Stage 2 – Personal
- Stage 3 – Management
- Stage 4 – Consequence
- Stage 5 – Collaboration
- Stage 6 – Refocusing

Alison had difficulty aligning inclusive philosophy with the basic philosophy held by the educators in her school community. She used phrases such as *what we've done in the past; we've gone around with that one too; are we better to go with subject specialization? Both methods have pros and cons* and *its a big trade off* (Interview with Alison, p. 13). These comments would suggest that Alison was in Stage 1 – Informational. She was definitely aware of inclusive philosophy, yet raised many questions and barriers to inclusion as she "envisioned the learning community" and "weighed the best methods for equitably meeting the needs of all students" (Landers & Weaver, 1997, p. 23).

Barbara also had trouble coming to grips with the implications of inclusive philosophy for her practice. Many of the phrases she used revealed her dilemma: *I don't know if it's best; I'm not sure it's in the best interest of the students; I don't know why we have to* and *I don't think it is possible* (Interview with Barbara). According to Landers and Weaver (1997), Barbara would most likely be in Hall's Stage 2 – Personal.

Barbara, like many others, raised concerns related to her daily performance in the classroom. She indicated, *there's no time; I spend all my time picking up the pieces and you have to teach the curriculum and you can't do that when you have 20 or 30 kids with varying needs*. Approximately half of the participants described the dilemma that resulted from the *need to cover the curriculum* and the *need to individualize instruction*. Concerns about efficient and effective teaching methodologies were associated with Hall's Stage 3 –

Management. According to Beninghof (1996), "practical 'how to' strategies are the primary focus of Stage 3" (p. 13).

Educators who raised concerns about the effect of inclusion on students were at Stage 4 – Consequence. Comments like: *Next year there is going to be an achievement exam and that curriculum is going to be tested* or *this little fellow that functions at a pre-kindergarten level might even be better off in a Kindergarten class* hit at the heart of the inclusive debate. Miriam challenged educators to ask themselves, "Are we mainstreaming, baby-sitting or segregating? What is the role of education?" (Interview with Miriam, p. 21). In other words, "inclusive education requires a rethinking of our education philosophy and how that philosophy is manifested" within our schools (Landers & Weaver, 1997, p. 24).

The initial rethinking of an educational philosophy will lead to refinement of its meaning for educators as they progress through Stages 0 – 4. Landers and Weaver (1997) claim that when educators enter the place where they begin refining philosophy, they enter Stage 5 – Collaboration and Stage 6 – Refocusing. Here, "Educators begin to identify ways in which they have changed practice for all students; show evidence of how inclusive practices have been beneficial for all students; and identify ways to improve upon initial thinking" (p. 25). The participants from Browallia Community School, Dusty Miller Community School and Candytuft Community School would have achieved Hall's Stages 5 or 6.

Hall's Stages of Concern have enabled me to identify how differing educational philosophies influenced inclusive practices. Miriam recognized, as a starting point, it was most important to acknowledge and accept each individual's perspective and level of readiness since these perspectives provided insight into each individual's understanding of inclusion, the issues they faced and their possible barriers to inclusion. Marjorie encouraged inclusion with her staff, yet admitted "in the end they would have to agree." Like Landers and Weaver (1997), it had been Marjorie's experience that it takes "fundamental change" in how we think about our school communities and our classrooms and "in the organizational and instructional methods we create and use to nourish them" (p. 25). She had also discovered, like Guetzloe (1999) and Johnson (1999), that through a collaborative model over time, it was possible to successfully move staff toward a unified inclusive system of education.

Collaborative Relationships

Although there were many different definitions of collaboration in the literature "they all reflect the notion of working together" (Wade, 2000, p. 73). Grenot-Scheyer et al. (2001) suggest that the "existence of a collaborative culture and the use of collaborative structures and supports [is one of] ... the most critical ... underlying features or basis ... of inclusive schools" (p. 11). These research findings provided many examples of collaboration within each of the schools in this study. Thus, one might question, if "collaboration is a cornerstone of inclusion" and collaboration is taking place within most schools, why does inclusion work in some schools and not others?

Common Goals

These findings revealed that collaborative efforts occurred for a variety of reasons within schools. In some cases, people worked together to achieve specific goals or objectives (i.e., Andrew working with the parents). Some collaborated because the nature of their teaching assignment required collaborative efforts (i.e., team teaching). Some, like Barbara, were operating in a survival mode, (i.e., asking for assistance with strategies, learning how to work with the teaching assistant, etc.) because they found the "demands of teaching a classroom with a variety of diverse needs ... and the added responsibility of including students with disabilities [to be] overwhelming" (Wade, 2000, p. 74). Although each of the participants was working collaboratively, it would be a leap to suggest they were working together with all staff to achieve common goals.

Researchers and writers on inclusion have found that inclusion cannot be effective unless educators, specialists, parents and students combine their resources and efforts, understand and support common values and goals regarding the education of all students, allocate time and resources to facilitate the process, and share in the decision-making and problem solving process (Elliot & McKenney, 1998; Grenot-Scheyer et al., 2001; Landers & Weaver, 1997; Smith & Dowdy, 1998; and Wade, 2000).

These research findings supported the findings in the literature in that the participants also declared that the collaborative development of common goals and values was critical to the effectiveness of inclusive programs. In schools like Lady Slipper Community School or Celosia Community School, even though the administration supported inclusive philosophy and encouraged inclusive practice, they were unable to make all staff "buy in" to a common goal. Part of the problem may have stemmed from the fact that the administrative decision-making model did not encourage a collaborative vision and goal setting process. Thus, some staff continued to support the traditional approach. The teams of educators within these schools were divided. Rick concluded inclusion does not work "unless individual teachers buy into that type of a program" (Interview with Rick, p. 14).

The participants in the more inclusive schools used phrases like: *the general atmosphere here is that inclusion is accepted; it's a comfortable process; I can really see the value in it;* and *we all bought in.* These participants had observed a similar finding to the one presented by Landers and Weaver (1997). "Once educators begin to embrace a collective perspective where all involved stakeholders are collectively responsible for the education of all students ... the concept of teaming will be a natural function or outcome" (p. 30).

Interdependence and Parity

Wade (2000) provided a useful analogy for conceptualizing the collaborative process.

> Interdependence can be understood by imagining a spoked wheel. The functional use of the wheel is dependent upon the strength and utility of each individual spoke. If too many spokes are broken or are too weak to carry the weight, the wheel will wobble. Similarly, the process of collaboration will "wobble" if individual members of the working team do not share the weight or responsibility of meeting a mutually defined goal. Due to the reciprocal nature of working together,

> collaboration requires parity, which means that each individual member of the group is a meaningful and contributing member throughout the process. (p. 75)

Thus, for schools like Johnny Jump-up High School where information was given to teachers on a "need to know basis;" where administrative decisions were made independently of those who would be effected; where there was a hierarchy of power, it was easy to see why efforts to provide a collaborative structure had proven to be unsuccessful. Absent from this model was the "shared responsibility" of planning for and meeting mutually defined goals. These teachers tended to teach independently from an "isolated island" approach.

The collaborative structures in place within Dusty Miller Community School and Browallia Community School, mirrored the spoked wheel analogy provided above. Marjorie explained how she involved all staff (i.e., the secretaries, librarians and bus drivers, if need be) in the decision-making process; encouraged all stakeholders to work collaboratively to meet the needs of all students; invited people to come to the community as a "whole person" and to do away with the limitations of role responsibilities. She described a scenario which prevented parity and created a "wobbly wheel."

> You've got situations where you are still trying to move some people to a place where they can see that power, power is nothing. You know, its an illusion. If we can give that up and admit that we don't really have all the answers, we don't really know all the answers and yes, we make mistakes. I made one yesterday and I'll make one tomorrow. And all of a sudden everybody puts down their arms and then all of a sudden you're working together on whatever the problems are that face us together. But as long as that power thing is in the middle, then we are not working together and we're wasting energy that we don't need to, against each other. (Interview with Marjorie, p. 22)

Interactive Exchange of Resources

Involved in the process of collaboration was the aspect of sharing both tangible (e.g., materials, resources, funding) and intangible (e.g., ideas, power, control) resources, in order to meet a common goal (Wade, 2000, p. 75). Grenot-Scheyer et al. (2001) stated, "in a time of increasing challenges for educators, (i.e., increasing performance expectations, competing financial needs and a diverse student body), sharing resources is more than a philosophical ideal, it is a practical necessity" (p. 5).

The participants of Waxvine Secondary School had created an interactive system of sharing information, materials, ideas and resources in the form of weekly student meetings. These meetings also included parents and students in the discussion. Thus, as Patricia commented, "They're all on the same page" (Waxvine Interview, p. 13). The collaborative process enabled teachers to share materials, strategies and ideas; provided a forum for a discussion on learning styles; encouraged collegial relationships and provided moral support that helped the teachers know, "You're not going insane. He's doing that in my class too" (Waxvine Interview, p. 13). Furthermore, the process involved structures and supports for following up on any decisions that were made, researching information and providing feedback, etc. which further supported the process of collaboration.

Decision Making

Collaboration as a decision-making process, was a common characteristic of inclusive programs described in the literature and within the schools in this study. The administrators of the two schools that were most effective in providing inclusive programs, opted to utilize collaborative decision-making methods. The participants described this process as being *two-way, interactive, responsive* and *effective*. I found, like Wade (2000), that the collaborative structures within schools varied depending on the personnel involved. In Browallia Community School, the collaborative process was "typically organized and thorough;" in Dusty Miller Community School, the collaborative process was "fluid and less rigid" (p. 76).

Collaborative decision-making was also featured within schools that utilized a top-down model with bottom-up involvement. For example, Waxvine Secondary School had developed a highly structured, controlled, yet collaborative support structure for all teachers, parents, students and specialists. As was mentioned previously, Patricia believed this process fostered inclusive practice because it involved all stakeholders, provided a collaborative process for problem solving and ensured clear communication. For the most part, collaborative processes that facilitated inclusion, were absent in the top-down model (i.e., Johnny Jump-up High School) within this study.

Problem Solving

An interesting feature of the inclusive models within this study was that they used collaborative methods to solve problems and issues. Walter described the school support team in Candytuft Community School and claimed that teachers routinely sought out the group when they encountered problems with individual students, had difficulty modifying or making accommodations for students and so on. Like Allan, Walter also described the collaborative methods used for deciding staffing, budgeting and scheduling issues. These administrators commented that it was necessary to facilitate (Walter) or direct (Allan) collaborative problem-solving sessions because "teachers often believe they are working together to solve a problem when, in fact, their behaviour should be characterized as a gripe session" (Waxvine Interview, p. 13). Wade (2000) reported, "Effective collaboration is threatened when partners either are unaware of the problem-solving process or simply do not adhere to its general framework" (p. 78).

Communication

Wade (2000) and Welch & Sheridan (1995), suggested that working with others during decision-making or problem-solving sessions required effective interpersonal communication skills. Many of the participants in this study recognized the increased need for effective communication in inclusive settings because of *the student meetings, increased parent communication with special needs parents, the involvement of parents in the learning community, the interaction between special education and regular program teachers, the decision-making process, sharing teaching strategies* and so on. The inclusive minded participants accepted the need for continual and ongoing communication as a natural requirement of the inclusive process whereas, the more traditional teachers viewed collaborative communication as *a threat, unnecessary work* and *a waste of my time.*

Thus, we return to the question posed at the beginning of this section: Why does inclusion work in some schools and not others? The answer according to the literature and the findings of this study, was that inclusion is more likely to be successful when all involved stakeholders collaborate to achieve common goals, work to achieve interdependence and parity, have an interactive exchange of resources and supports and use collaborative decision-making, problem solving and communication methods (Elliot & McKenney, 1998; Grenot-Scheyer, 2001; Landers & Weaver, 1997; Smith & Dowdy, 1998; and Wade, 2000).

Barriers To Inclusion

Despite the benefits of working together to promote inclusion, Philips and McCulough (1990) suggest, "Educators and parents are doomed to failure and frustration in their efforts to collaborate unless they first understand the various barriers that may thwart their efforts" (cited in Wade, 2000, p. 81).

Cultural and Systemic Factors

The findings of this research revealed numerous cultural and systemic factors that influenced collaboration within schools. First, the school's culture was a major factor that either promoted or impeded collaborative efforts. Second, the school's formal system of operation had a profound influence on whether collaboration was possible. Third, systemic influences, such as the bureaucratic structures of school divisions or the provincial mandates regarding curriculum and assessment, were a factor.

According to Beninghof (1996), "All organizations including schools have a unique culture regarding inclusion, not usually transferable to a different time and place" (p. 13). Therefore, the inclusive culture of a school like Browallia Community School would not necessarily be transferable to a school like Johnny Jump-Up High School. Wade (2000) suggested this is the case because "the school culture is influenced by the general values and attitudes of the neighbourhood, community and society, as well as those shared by the education professionals in the school building" (p. 80). Therefore, each educator's perspective, when taken collectively, provided the framework that in turn, provided meaning and direction within the organization. Given that the participants in Alison's school accepted "the way things are done around here" and hailed past education models, it was not surprising to find that their efforts had been unsuccessful. According to Kurpius (1991), "The culture of an organization is the most powerful factor determining the degree of collaboration that can occur in it" (cited in Wade, 2000, p. 80).

The second impeding factor that was revealed by this study, was described in the literature as the "formal system of organizational structures within schools" (Landers & Weaver, 1997, p. 30). Every school has a unique set of policies, timetables, budgets, role descriptions, grading structures and "ways of doing things" (Waxvine Interview, p. 6). In some cases, these structures present barriers to collaborative efforts. For example, Allan suggested his staff had decided to go with the minimum requirement for teacher preparation time and as a result, teachers were provided with a limited amount of time to work collaboratively with colleagues. Alison described how the budget had influenced their decision to employ one special education teacher to support 12 special needs students rather than hire the required number of teaching assistants to support these students within the regular classroom. In both cases, the formal organizational structures within the building went against the inclusive or collaborative process.

The third inhibiting factor dealt with systemic influences. According to Clough (1998), "The ways schools are organized, what they teach, how it is taught – and the host of other features that make up the school curriculum – are expressions of how a wider society is organized, of what it values (and of how in the past it has come to value these things)" (p. 5). Thus, it is at this level that we ask the questions: what do we want learners to know and for what purpose? At any point in time, school curriculum is a reflection of societal culture. The traditional dual track system of education continues to reinforce the separateness of students with disabilities, "not least by cutting them off from the common curriculum which is an expression of the culture in which we commonly live" (Clough, 1998, p. 6).

Conceptual Barriers

Conceptual barriers are those which result from beliefs, values and the expectations for "how things are done" in the school (Wade, 2000, p. 81). These research findings clearly indicated that effective inclusion was supported by hiring staff with an inclusive mindset "who are flexible across grade levels" (Interview with Marjorie, p. 6). Thus, in schools with "a long standing staff," the traditional mode of operation often became an impediment to collaboration (Interview with Alison, p. 7). Participants like Alison and Barbara believed that the traditional dual-track model provided for the "best interest of all children" through homogeneous groupings and within a variety of programming options. Miriam suggested this conceptual stance was not unique to the older generation of teachers. She had observed this perspective amongst younger teachers as well. Miriam had observed that when "the philosophical mindset is not there … it is a very uncomfortable process and it's not that they don't care about children, they just don't know how they are going to include them" (Interview with Miriam, p. 16).

Pragmatic Barriers

According to Wade (2000) pragmatic barriers are usually associated with systemic and logistical factors within the school, such as lack of time for implementing consultation and collaboration (p. 82). Of all of the barriers described within these research findings, concerns of this nature appeared to present the greatest barrier to collaboration. The participants identified pragmatic barriers through the following phrases: *there is not enough time; there is not enough money; our hands are tied with the budget the way it is; the IPP is too cumbersome; it's a waste of our special education teacher's time; etc.* These findings supported the work done by Ware (1994) by illustrating how school schedules and physical layouts often perpetuated the isolation of teachers which limited opportunities for them to interact and solve problems (cited in Wade, 2000, p. 82). The observation of

Browallia Community School revealed that a school's physical design or layout can be a supporting factor of collaboration and inclusive practice. Furthermore, teachers were often expected to collaborate "on their own time" and, in some cases, provide materials and resources "out of their own pocket" (Interview with Candice, p. 2; Waxvine Interview, p. 31).

Almost every participant identified the "bureaucratic red tape" surrounding the assessment and identification of students with disabilities and the need for an IPP. From the participants' perspectives, *IPPs are a lot of unnecessary paperwork; are needed to justify to someone and I'm not sure who that someone is; are costly to kids ... because it takes teacher's time and attention away from kids* and so on.

Finally, every participant stressed the need to provide appropriate resources and supports, one of which was to ensure that collaborative efforts be practiced formally and predictably (Interview with Allan, p. 13). Wade (2000) concluded, "systemic structures must be modified to facilitate the occurrence of formal collegial interactions" (p. 84).

Attitudinal Barriers

Bennett, Deluca, and Bruns (1997) reported, "general teacher attitudes toward the concept of inclusion and level of confidence with respect to personal skills and ability," were strongly correlated to the potential for success in inclusive situations (p. 124). "Attitudes are affective responses based on a person's belief about a phenomena" therefore, individuals feel positively or negatively about a situation based on what they think or believe (Grenot-Scheyer et al., 2001, p. 13). These research findings revealed the participants reaction toward collaboration based on what they thought it involved, what they thought the outcomes would be and what they believed about their role as an educator. For example, the participants from Johnny Jump-up High School explained why their school support team had been ineffective. Janice commented on the amount of time it took to conduct weekly meetings and the fact that most teachers need issues to be dealt with "now" (Interview with Janice, p. 6). Barbara felt threatened by collaboration because it implied she was not capable of providing for the students on her own (Interview with Barbara, p. 8).

Professional Barriers

Miriam felt that a major barrier to collaboration in promoting inclusion was the lack of professional training for teachers. She questioned whether the academic authorities (i.e., the Universities) were adequately preparing teachers for the current education system.

> There is a great deal of resistance to having children that require differentiation in the classroom in the first place, once you get beyond primary. Primary teachers are clear. "I' ve got this group, this group and this group in my classroom." They cluster the kids immediately. "You can read, you can' t read, you can' t sit still," you know, so they cluster the kids and away they go. But upper elementary and junior high teachers haven' t had training in that direction in their university, nor do they have the philosophical mindset…And the higher up you go in the grade levels, the more rigid the staff becomes in terms of, "I have a curriculum to teach here. If the child isn' t prepared to be in here to take that curriculum, then he shouldn' t be in here. He should be some place else taking a curriculum that is appropriate for him to take." The junior and senior high teachers go into teaching as curriculum specialists, as subject specialists and don' t choose to be everything to everyone. They went into teaching because they have a particular passion for a particular content area and they enjoy working with kids. I don' t think they have enough training, at the University level, that they are going to be dealing with special needs kids in their classrooms. (Interview with Miriam, pp. 25 - 27)

Many researchers (Pugach & Allen-Meares, 1985; Phillips & McCulough, 1990; Welch & Sheridan, 1993; and Ware, 1994) reported that "differences in professional preparation programs can result in disproportionate knowledge of and experience in collaboration" (cited in Wade, 2000, p. 84). Psychologists, counsellors and other education specialists may have had significant training in collaborative problem solving and communication, however, for teachers this was generally not the case.

Leadership

A significant finding of this research was that the existence of inclusion in Alberta middle schools was largely dependent on the philosophy, attitude, values, and skill set of the school principal. Marjorie believed that as the "gate keeper," the school principal was a major player in the change process within schools (Interview with Marjorie, p. 1). Brad indicated he had been working for 15 years to "move people toward inclusion" (Interview with Brad, p. 1). Walter compared the inclusive climate in his previous school with his current school and realized, "he had a long way to go" with his present staff (Interview with Walter, p. 21). This finding supported the work of Barnett and Monda-Amaya (1998) who suggested that principals must "function as primary change agents" since they are "ultimately responsible for facilitating inclusive practices" within schools (p. 181).

As the primary instructional leader within the school, the principal was charged with the responsibility of creating the inclusive school community (Barnett & Monda-Amaya, 1998; Capper et al., 2000; and Landers & Weaver, 1977). Given that half of the focus of this research was administrators within Alberta middle schools, the role of the school district administration was not included.

Four Key Roles

Numerous researchers (Barnett & Monda-Amaya, 1998; Capper et al., 2000; Landers & Weaver, 1997; Sapon-Shevin, 1995; and Stainback & Stainback, 1990) have identified key roles for principals resulting in a list of skills and competencies. Similarly, the findings of this research revealed a thorough list of expectations or competencies. From every list it was evident that there tended to be an "expert requirement" for school principals.

First, school principals were expected to provide support to teachers. According to Barnett and Monda-Amaya (1998), this can only be achieved when principals have "knowledge and skills in effective instruction, assessment and discipline" (p. 181). The participants in this study expected the school principal to support teachers by providing: *general, ongoing support; suitable teaching assignments; preparation and collaboration time; teaching assistance; flexible scheduling or time-tabling; resources and materials; limited class sizes so that teachers can personalize instruction and provide appropriate support* and *opportunities for professional development*. Not one of the participants in this study identified the need for principals to be curriculum and assessment specialists. Nevertheless, the teachers did place a certain emphasis on "best practice" and believed that effective administrators should "do it all" (Interview with Julia, p. 11).

Second, school principals were expected to facilitate caring relationships with students, teachers and the community (Barnett & Monda-Amaya, 1998, p. 182). These findings provided a variety of methods for building an inclusive school community and culture: *by example through their lived action; hiring staff that are flexible across grade levels; continuing to teach; be in the trenches; being visible, accessible, approachable and involved; providing thorough discipline based on mutual respect; taking strategic action to involve parents and the community; mediating between parents, the community and teachers* and *advocating for the rights of all students*. Capper et al. (2000) provided a similar list which included the following additional characteristics, "principals need to help build a collective non-negotiable vision; co-create an implementation plan; lead collaboratively, which nurtures trust; encourage risk taking; and value and use action research" (p. 52).

Third, there was also evidence to support the need to encourage and support collaborative interactions (Monda-Amaya, 1998) and to budget creatively (Capper et al., 2000) within these research findings. According to the participants in this study, inclusive principals lead toward the merger of all services by: *encouraging collaborative planning, team teaching and open communication; participating as a member of a collaborative problem-solving team that invents solutions from the ground up; coordinating services; budgeting creatively with staff; involving staff in all decision-making;* and *empowering staff.* Marjorie, like Capper et al. (2000), emphasized that policy-based mandates can "perpetuate segregated programs" or "support the diverse needs of learners." She explained, all too often these mandates are supported by limited financial resources and as a result, principals have let budgets rather than students' needs dictate their actions. (Capper et al., 2000, p. 145; Interview with Marjorie, p. 20).

Finally, the most inclusive principals in this study created leadership or school support teams that provided support and assistance to teachers, an opportunity for sharing concerns and issues and a collaborative problem solving process. According to Landers and Weaver (1999), this process "gives credibility to the importance of inclusive education efforts and provides a forum for addressing change-related struggles" (p. 32).

In practice, the inclusive movement has placed many new demands on the leadership teams within schools in Alberta. From these findings, it was clear that administrators also faced many real-life barriers to inclusion. They described the challenges of dealing with school division politics, pressures from parents, the need to support and encourage teachers, mediate where necessary, budget creatively and so on. Miriam concluded:

> In the administrative role, it's a big dilemma to know where children's needs are best served. And the moral, ethical, philosophical implications for saying that these children should be in a school or shouldn't be in a school and shouldn't be learning ... so where do you draw the line then? You can't really draw the line, you know? (Interview with Miriam, p. 29)

Curricular and Instructional Approaches

According to Rogers (1993), "Effective inclusion is characterized by its virtual invisibility" (p. 174). This means that inclusive teachers naturally employ a variety of instructional methods in order to meet the diverse needs of students within the classroom. Rogers argued, "The best teachers in inclusive practice are simply the best teachers" (p. 175).

Academic Outcomes

"The instructional practices ... recommended for inclusive schools have been recognized as exemplary practices for all teachers" (Barnett & Monda-Amaya, 1998, p. 182). The list of identified strategies within the literature was extensive. Barnett and Monda-Amaya (1998) endorsed "collaboration, outcome-based instruction, cooperative learning and teaching, learning strategies and curriculum modification" (p. 182). Wade (2000) recommended methods that would "promote the active, social construction of knowledge; that are interactive, experiential and inquiry based; and that provide guided instruction" (p. 8). Grenot-Scheyer et al. (2001) sanctioned "the general redesign approaches" such as "integrated thematic units, cooperative group structures, multilevel instruction and alternative assessment." These authors believed these methods were "critical for appropriate access by students with disabilities" (p. 11).

The findings from this study produced the following list of strategies: *individualization, adaptation, modification, accommodation, differentiation, large and small group instruction, collaborative and cooperative teaching* and *a focus on multiple intelligence and learning styles.* Despite the variety of instructional tools available to teachers, these research findings indicated that inclusive teachers intuitively adapted curriculum (e.g., the length of the assignment, time allotted, level of support, multi-sensory input, specific accommodations such as a calculator, scribe, etc.), allowed a variety of medium for output (e.g., poster, presentation, written report, etc.), varied expectations for participation and designed programs to meet individual needs (e.g., alternate goals or curriculum).

Although they used many of the methods recommended in theory, Betty cautioned there were no "magic solutions or strategies." She explained that many teachers used a "trial and error approach until they found a strategy or method that worked for "students of high need" (Interview with Betty, p. 6). Rick noted, "What works with one kid doesn't always work with the next kid, even if they seem similar" (Interview with Rick, p. 8). For most of the inclusive minded teachers, the importance of programming for each student on a "case by case basis" was critical. Thus, the curricular and instructional approaches used by the participants in this study were not static. These teachers adapted and changed their methods, mid-stride in some cases, as students' needs changed. What was important to these teachers was that each of their students "demonstrate personal growth" in line with their "established IPP goals" (Interview with Kerri, p. 10).

Social Outcomes

Another interesting finding within this research study was described by Grenot-Scheyer et al., (2001) who quoted Brinker and Thorpe (1984), Kennedy and Itkonen (1994), and Meyer, Park, Grenot-Scheyer, Schwartz and Harry (1998), "Although physical integration provides access and can result in an increase in interactions simply by virtue of proximity, meaningful social integration requires thoughtful facilitation by teachers and peers" (p. 11). Many of the participants suggested that placement in the regular classroom does not guarantee that a child will be included in any meaningful way (Interview with Marjorie, p. 12). Kerri and Julia both talked about the importance of "making a space for all students" (Interview with Kerri, p. 4; Interview with Julia, p. 8). Kerri concluded, "It takes time and thought on both the students' part and on the teacher's part" (p. 4). About half of the participants alluded to the "student centered initiatives" such as "peer mediation, peer tutoring, conflict resolution and democratic class structures" to facilitate membership and a sense of belonging for those who had been excluded in the past. (Grenot-Scheyer et al., 2001, p. 11).

Authentic Assessment

A third finding resulted from the concerns expressed over the need to find some form of "authentic assessment as indicators of progress" (Capper et al., 2000, p. 89). Every participant debated the need for authentic assessment versus the provincial standardized achievement examinations. Miriam, like Wade (2000), suggested that achievement tests are "high stakes" assessments because results are frequently used to compare school divisions, schools and even teachers (p. 25). Many of the participants observed that the students that challenged them the most were the ones affected most by their inability to appropriately assess them in ways that would show their true abilities. Capper et al. (2000) found, "As many as 38% of students" should not be assessed with the current standardized assessment practices. They suggested that educators have been unable to offer appropriate modifications for these students (p. 115). Many similar concerns were expressed within these findings and within the literature. The participants challengeD the value of standardized assessment in the following comments: *There is stress for students and undue pressure for teachers; It forces a group teaching model; I feel pressured to meet the curricular expectations and prepare kids; It's a one time paper and pencil test; Learning* *styles are not accommodated* and ***I am frustrated by the fact that this kid has had an extra 30 minutes every year with us and now he can't have it***. In Barbara's words, "There has got to be another way" (Interview with Barbara, p. 9).

The curricular and instructional methods identified above, are some of the "best" current practices for all students in inclusive settings. Regardless of academic aptitude or specific talents, all students are members of society. They must function as members of society in the present and the future. They will not function within limited, labelled groups as the education system has been traditionally organized. Inclusive teachers are challenged to see "the individual," to evaluate the various methods and to think of them along a continuum from the least academically talented students to the most gifted students; to design meaningful learning opportunities for all students. If teachers approach the learning of content within a meaningful, student-centered, democratic context - the benefits for all students will be many and more diverse students will be able to gain from the learning experience.

Role Changes

For the majority of participants in this study, the question, "How do we go about providing for all students in the regular classroom?" was clear evidence that a philosophical shift was being made. Perspectives were changing from that of advancing those students who have earned the right to be in the next grade or the next class (i.e., the curricular focus) to believing that all students belong with their same-age peers in the next grade or the next class (i.e., student-centered focus). The educators in this study who were, "committed to inclusive education are committed to rethinking the purpose of education and creating a new system that embraces *all* learners" (Landers & Weaver, 1997, p. 27).

From The Traditional Method

In Barbara's time, when teachers were individually responsible for a grade level or for a certain subject area, they did not necessarily have to agree on the purpose of education or on the methods used to realize that purpose. Teachers could teach the same subjects but in different ways, make different assignments and evaluate student learning differently. This notion was challenged when special needs students were placed in regular classrooms because a debate arose between educators on "how best to provide for students with disabilities." Initially, the regular classroom teachers surfaced as the winners because they maintained, "this is the way we do things" and it was generally accepted practice that the individual classroom teacher be the individual decision-maker regarding programming for students.

Over the past ten years, however, regular classroom teachers have experienced tremendous frustration and stress. As Capper et al. (2000) realized, "We cannot continue to do what we have been doing in the name of meeting the educational and behavioural needs of each learner" (p. 165). There is evidence to prove that traditional methods are not working within the overall systemic structure. According to Rick, "it doesn't work [in the current structure] … Individual teachers need to buy in [to inclusion] (Interview with Rick, p. 14).

The problems associated with the traditional way of thinking are illustrated in the poem, *The Animal School*, by George H. Reavis.

> **The Animal School**
> by George H. Reavis (date unknown)
>
> Once upon a time, the animals decided they must do something heroic to meet the problems of a new world. So they organized a school. They adopted an activity curriculum consisting of running, climbing, swimming and flying. To make it easier to administer, all the animals took all the subjects.
>
> The duck was excellent in swimming – better in fact than his instructor – and made passing grades in flying, but he was very poor in running. Since he was slow in running, he had to stay after school and also drop swimming to practice running. This was kept up until his web feet were badly worn and he was only average in swimming.
>
> The rabbit started at the top of the class in running, but had a nervous breakdown because of so much overwork trying to compete in the swimming area.
>
> The squirrel was excellent in climbing until he developed frustration in flying class where his teacher made him start from the ground up instead of from the tree-top-down.

> The eagle was a problem child and was disciplined severely. In the climbing class he beat all the others to the top of the tree, but insisted on using his own way to get there.
>
> At the end of the year, an abnormal eel that could swim exceedingly well and also run, climb and fly a little had the highest average and was valedictorian.
>
> The prairie dogs stayed out of school and fought the tax levy because the administration would not add digging and burrowing to the curriculum. They apprenticed their children to the badger and later joined the ground hogs and gophers to start a successful private school.

Landers and Weaver (1997) wrote, "Collaboration is the key to successful inclusion" (p. 95). The findings of this research would indicate that while collaboration was a critical feature of inclusive programs, it was not the starting point for movement toward inclusion. As Miriam pointed out, "Teachers have been collaborating for years" (Interview with Miriam, p. 26). In the situations where teachers were expected to collaborate against their will resentment, anger and a refusal to comply was the result (Interview with Barbara, p. 8).

Miriam and Marjorie, like Capper et al. (2000) believed,

> True change begins where we have the most influence and the most influence occurs where we have the most control. Thus, change must begin with the individual and the only individuals whom educators can change are themselves. Educators spend a significant amount of time and energy on issues over which they have little control. Educators must begin with their own assumptions and their own behaviour and move into service delivery changes that are beyond bandages. We must begin with where we can change. The walk may be treacherous and long for some, but until we take the first steps, we will continue to perpetuate past practices. (p. 167)

Marjorie described how, over the course of a number of years and with considerable facilitation, "people broaden their scope of what they are willing to try" (Interview with Marjorie, p. 7). She described a scenario where "one of the most inflexible people in the building" eventually got to a place where they could say, "I think I would be willing to go there." Through a collaborative process where the "people involved" take an active role in the decision-making, problem solving and communication process and when they see "that, [as the principal], you are willing to go the distance for them [support them], then they will go the distance for you" (p. 8).

From the teacher's perspective, the move toward inclusion has had major implications for the day-to-day practice within the classroom. Some have adapted easily; others struggle but continue to work at it because they believe in the values of inclusion; still others refuse outright, to comply. One of the participants in this study, who was the most opposed and who vehemently adhered to traditional methods, presented an interesting analogy.

> You need to look realistically at the needs of kids. I mean if you took your kids to the doctor with pneumonia, they are going to prescribe one thing. If you take the kid to the doctor with a bum knee, then they're not going to give you the same thing. So when you have two different kids, then I think you have to … (Interview with Barbara, p. 10)

Barbara concluded by saying, "I mean – you have to teach 20 to 30 kids the same curriculum and you just can't do it. So teachers have huge classes with varying needs and I don't think you can do it" (p. 10). On the one hand, Barbara presented a wonderful argument in support of the need for individualized instruction; on the other hand, she recognized the practical limitations for achieving this ideal. Thus, Barbara's reluctance might possibly have stemmed more from the lack of available resources and supports for teachers than an opposing philosophical perspective.

The following story, *The Fair Family*, provides a similar analogy, illustrating the need for individualized solutions and the result of pressing on with traditional approaches.

> **The Fair Family**
> by Eunice Shonk, 1995.
>
> When Mr. and Mrs. McGill were married, they decided to have a large family. "All girls," said Mrs. McGill. "All boys," said Mr. McGill. "Then we'll have four of each," said Mrs. McGill. "Good," said Mr. McGill. "Fair's fair."
>
> One night when the oldest McGill child was 17 and the youngest was two, Mr. and Mrs. McGill were awakened by a terrible noise. All of the children were coughing. "Well," said Mrs. McGill. "we must make up some of my mother's honey and lemon juice. Mother always used that for a cough." "Good," said Mr. McGill, "and we'll give it to them all – fair's fair." So they did and the second McGill stopped coughing but the rest of them continued.
>
> The next morning, everyone was very tired for no one could sleep with seven coughing children. "I believe we must take the children to the doctor," said Mrs. McGill. "You're right," said Mr. McGill. "We will take them all, fair's fair." And so they did.

> The doctor examined all the children. He called Mr. and Mrs. McGill to his office. "This is very unusual," he said. "Your children all have different illnesses. The oldest McGill has an irritated throat. He should stop smoking. The second McGill has a cold. Just wait, she will get better. The third McGill has intestinal worms. He needs some medicine. The fourth McGill has strep throat. She needs penicillin. The fifth McGill has an allergy. Take away his feather pillow. The sixth McGill has pneumonia. She should be hospitalized and treated with antibiotics. The seventh McGill has tuberculosis and should be treated in a sanitarium. The youngest McGill has asthma. You should move to Arizona."
>
> "Well," said Mrs. McGill, "whatever shall we do?" "We will take the children home and think about this," said Mr. McGill. "We must decide on the fair thing for everyone."
>
> The McGill's thought and thought and finally they decided on a plan that would be fair to everyone. They would move half-way to Arizona, give each child half a penicillin shot and half a dose of worm medicine, take away all cigarettes and pillows and just wait for them to get better. And so they did.
>
> The first and second and fifth McGill children got better; the third and fourth and eighth children continued to cough, but learned to do it quietly and the sixth and seventh McGill children died.
>
> "Well," said Mrs. McGill, "it is too bad about the children, but isn't it nice not to hear coughing at night anymore?" "Yes," said Mr. McGill, "and no one can say we weren't fair. And fair is fair."

To Fundamental Change

As all of the teachers in this study recognized, successful inclusion requires fundamental change in the way educators think and act in order to "rethink, restructure and recreate a different kind of classroom" (Wade, 2000, p. 21). Wade envisioned:

> A flexible curriculum involving project learning, thematic instruction, cooperative learning and authentic assessment. [To make it happen, she contends] we need to move away from the kind of isolation where we have one teacher who is in charge of 30 kids. Instead, we need to say: How do we arrange classrooms where there may be two or three adults who share responsibility and expertise and collaborate to meet the needs of a wide range of learners? (p. 21)

Still, this type of collaboration is not easily achieved. It requires administrative support, communication skills, shared goals and commitment to the inclusive process. Individual teachers need support and resources to assist them through the change process.

Parent – Professional Partnerships

Although the parent perspective was not represented in the findings of this research, I felt it was important to comment on the parent-professional relationship since it was featured as a critical component of the successful inclusive models within this study. At least half of the participants addressed the need to include parents in a variety of ways, from planning for individualized programs to providing in-school assistance. Furthermore, they identified the need for open, on-going and two-way communication with parents. Andrew spoke about the importance of a "positive track record ... which gives parents something they can trust" (Interview with Andrew, p. 5). For the most part, the participants described what Landers and Weaver (1997) referred to as, "elements of a partnership: a common goal, mutual understanding, trust between partners and respect for one another's contributions" (p. 45).

Miriam claimed a critical starting point for educators was the need to understand "where special needs parents are coming from" (p. 24). She, like Marjorie, described the often tenuous and delicate balance that was required and the need to "listen" and value parent perspectives. Several participants mentioned the need to be straightforward with parents. "Parents need to know the reality too" (Interview with Rick, p. 13). It was recommended, both within these findings and the findings in the literature, "In order for parents to know the reality they need to be involved in a meaningful way" (Capper et al., 2000, p. 51).

Grenot-Scheyer et al. (2001) found that parents "believe strongly in the value of parents as partners." Parents expressed the need to be involved in a cooperative and collaborative manner that focuses on the needs of the child. "In order to achieve a sustained effort that works for kids, all members of the team must have the desire to put the needs of kids first. Parents are often the missing link in the chain, the last piece in the puzzle" (p. 137).

The following excerpt, which illustrates the parent perspective, was taken from the Paperflower School Division town hall meeting.

> I have no doubt that if I left my son in the class that he was in at the segregated school he would not be where he is now. And its not only the education part of it. It's also about being with your community – where you live is part of it. Here, he is with kids his age who challenge him to come up to the level where he should be at.

> As adults, we sometimes don't know where he should be at but when he's with kids his own age, they know. If he starts misbehaving, then ...
>
> But it's also very important to me as a parent, that the school listens to me and Dusty Miller School has always been very open and they are willing to help me if I have a concern. And sometimes people think they don't want to challenge him, but I would say, "no! Tell him he is not allowed to be in his world" and now he's never in his world. So the school has to have that connection with the parents.
>
> But also as a parent, the issues that you are dealing with– accepting your child's special needs is very difficult. So you are not only dealing with the education issues. When I was told that my son was autistic I was in a room and I had a psychologist come in. They did not even tell me that they were assessing my son for autism. I had no clue. I didn't even hear the word. The psychologist was telling me in her assessment, every now and then she would spit out the word autism. I was shocked. I had to stop the meeting and say, "Are you telling me that my son, is like, possibly autistic." And she said, "Yeah." And it hit me. I was so stunned. I actually left the meeting and walked out.
>
> So you are dealing with the emotions of the parent too and so the school system can't just say, "We've got to push this child this way." You also have to deal with the parent who is a little, you know, out there, because they are trying to cope with the special needs thing.
>
> So there are two different levels, I think we are talking about here. I wouldn't have brought my son here for Kindergarten and I've mentioned that. When my son got to the position where he was behaviourally okay, then you can start pushing the education, you know, but if they are not behaviourally handling it, then they are not going to be hearing it anyway. You know what I mean? I don't know if they could handle young kids like my son coming into Kindergarten, not that the Kindergarten teacher isn't awesome, but because you have so much and you've got to get the program going and you've got to get the funding going and you've got all these things going, so while you've got this kid in Kindergarten, who people are trying to handle, there is no funding.
>
> Nothing is set up and I know it boils down to funding. I have no doubt about that, but you don't tell the parent that. The parent has to figure that out which is really frustrating because when my son was first diagnosed, I kept saying, "Why are they trying to push this label on him? Why are they pushing autism?" And I would fight and say, "He's not autistic. He's just not doing this and he's not doing that." And meanwhile the school was saying, "Yeah but, we need the money." And I was saying, "No! He's not special needs," and so there was that fight. Now, I think funding is important to mention to the parents so that we can say, "You know we need this money so we can ... " You know what I mean? You're dealing with a parent who might be in denial.
>
> I don't know, there are just so many things. But I know my son has really been a success here. He's at a reading level. You know later in life, the government is going to have to pay for my son's career if he is going to be having a job or not. So focusing on labour, I mean my son is not going to be a psychologist or, you know, that's fine. So let's focus on getting him to be able to do simple things – getting him to the reading level that he needs to be at, you know, not getting him into the textbook. You know that just frustrates him. He doesn't need to know that. He needs to know how to read, write and the basics – get him to that point, then he's not going to cost the government lots and lots once he's out of the school system. You know ... okay, I'll get off my soapbox. (pp. 11 - 13)

From this parent's perspective, all she wanted was to be involved in the process; to have been given the information; to be supported as she grieved; to believe that her local school could include her son in his own community and provide a meaningful, individualized program for her son that would prepare him to be a productive citizen in society.

Understanding the parent's perspective is an important requirement in inclusive education. Often educators are challenged to see the experience from the parent's perspective. The following story teaches a meaningful lesson on the importance of valuing each individual and provides an interesting analogy of what it must be like to be the parent of a child with disabilities.

Welcome to Holland
by Emily Pearl Kingsley

I am often asked to describe the experience of raising a child with disability – to try to help people who have not shared that unique experience to understand it, to imagine how it would feel. It's like this...

When you're going to have a baby, it's like planning a fabulous trip – to Italy. You have to buy a bunch of guidebooks and make wonderful plans. The Coliseum, the Michelangelo, David, the gondolas in Venice. You many learn some hand phrases in Italian. It is all very exciting.

After months of eager anticipation, the day finally arrives. You pack your bags and off you go. Several hours later, the plane lands. The flight attendant comes in and says, "Welcome to Holland."

"HOLLAND!!?" you say. What do you mean Holland? I signed up for Italy! I'm supposed to be in Italy. ALL MY LIFE I'VE DREAMED OF ITALY."

But there has been a change in flight plans. They have landed in Holland and there you must stay.

The important thing is that they have not taken you to a horrible, disgusting, filthy place, full of pestilence, famine and disease. It's just a different place.

So you must go out and buy new guidebooks. And you must learn a whole new language. And you will meet a whole new group of people you would never have met

It is just a different place. It is slower paced than Italy, less flashy than Italy. But after you have been there for a while you catch your breath, you look around, and you begin to notice that Holland has windmills, Holland has tulips, Holland even has Rembrandts.

But everyone you know is coming and going from Italy, and they are all bragging about what a wonderful time they had there. And for the rest of your life, you will say, "Yes, that's where I was supposed to go. That is what I had planned."

The pain of that will never, ever, ever go away because the loss of that dream is a very significant loss.

> But if you spend your life mourning the fact that you didn't get to Italy, you may never be free to enjoy the very special, the very lovely things about Holland.

Chapter Summary

This chapter provided a comparative analysis of the findings as they related to the literature. For each of the main categories or themes, summaries of the participants' responses together with appropriate quotations from the literature were provided. For the most part, the findings from this research supported the findings in the literature.

Illuminated by the findings of this research was the fact that the current understanding of inclusion was much broader based than was the definition provided as a basis for understanding. The participants generally agreed on four common characteristics and presented a variety of additional features they believed defined inclusion. A primary focus for understanding inclusion was the need to value individual perspectives. Recognizing this continuum of values, philosophies and practices was the first step toward inclusive education. Another feature that was identified as being critical to inclusive practice was the aspect of collaborative relationships based on common goals, interdependence and parity, an interactive exchange of resources, collaborative decision-making, problem solving and communicating. The findings revealed a variety of barriers to inclusion, leadership issues, curricular and instructional approaches and highlighted the need for role changes and parent-professional partnerships.

As well, it was anticipated that this study would determine why some schools were successfully including students with disabilities while others were not. Thus, through the comparative analysis with the findings in literature, the factors that facilitated or inhibited successful inclusion were identified.

CHAPTER SIX

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This final chapter provides an overview of the study and is divided into five parts. The first section summarizes the purpose, method and significance of the study. The second section describes my assessment of the findings in the form of conclusions. Section three provides recommendations for future practice. The fourth section offers suggestions for further research. This chapter concludes with a personal reflection on my experience in carrying out this work.

Summary of the Study

The purpose of this research was to obtain the perceptions and interpretations of educators in Alberta middle schools regarding inclusion, in order to portray a clear picture of current inclusive practices. Data were gathered through qualitative interviews with 17 participants (i.e., administrators, special education coordinators, counsellors and teachers). As well, data from the Paperflower School Division town hall meeting was included in this study. Observations of ten inclusive classrooms added to the data collected for this study. Finally, the data gathered through the follow-up correspondence (e.g., e-mails and telephone calls) were used to verify the accuracy of the data I had gathered. Where possible the findings from the observational data and the follow-up correspondence were included.

Analysis of the data revealed the "physical setting" (e.g., the school's physical layout or design), the "human setting" (e.g., the organization of the people, the characteristics of the groups or individuals being observed, etc.), the "interactional setting" (e.g., the formal, informal, planned, unplanned, verbal and non-verbal interactions that were taking place), and the "program setting" (e.g., teaching practice, curriculum and resources) (Cohen et al., 2000, p. 305).

Patterning my approach after the work done by Crossman (1996), I used two methods of analysis: grounded theory and phenomenology. Cohen et al.'s (2000) procedural tools for analyzing qualitative data were used to identify the categorical list of details that emphasized discovery. The phenomenological approach was used to go beyond the list of categorical details to "transform the lived experience" of educators participating in this study into a "textual expression of its essence" (van Manen, 1990, p. 36).

This study was significant because it examined current inclusive models and provided the experiences and stories of educators in successful and some not so successful inclusive contexts. A comparative analysis of these findings and the literature on inclusion illuminated the fact that the current understanding of inclusion was much broader based than was the definition provided as a basis for understanding. Four common characteristics defining inclusion were presented as well as a variety of additional school specific characteristics. Movement toward inclusive education was dependent on:

1. recognition and acceptance of the continuum of values, philosophies and practices that live within each building (i.e., valuing individual perspectives),
2. the development of collaborative relationships with respect to educational decision-making, problem solving and communication,
3. recognition and acceptance of the barriers to inclusion,
4. effective collaborative leadership,
5. a variety of inclusive curricular and instructional approaches.
6. a shift in role responsibilities (i.e., a merger of the traditional dual-track system),
7. the development of parent-professional partnerships.

It was anticipated that the reader may see their own lives reflected in the participants' stories and experiences and learn from the "shared experience." As well, the reader may have developed a greater understanding of the phenomena as it relates to inclusion of students in the middle school years. Finally, this study revealed many questions and concerns that may be of significance for further practice and research.

Conclusions

Throughout this study themes and categories were presented which illustrated the important elements of inclusion and were re-presented to highlight the significance of issues denoted by the repetition of themes. It is now my privilege to reflect on the issues of inclusive education in order to emphasize what I saw as the key elements in understanding the dynamics of inclusive policy and practice. Table 4.0 illustrates whether the findings in this study support or contradict the findings in the literature.

Table 4.0 Conclusions

Conclusions	Supports the Literature	Contradicts the Literature
1. In addition to the four common characteristics, inclusion is defined by school specific practices.		√
2. Flexibility and a continuum of options are critical to successful inclusion.	√	
3. The ability of schools to sustain inclusive education is dependent on the provision of material, human and financial resources and supports	√	
4. Involvement builds synergy which encourages and challenges educators to stretch their traditional boudaries	√	
5. One's level of comfort and perception of one's ability must be considered when moving toward inclusion.	√	
6. Inclusion requires that educators be creative and flexible and utilize responsive instruction practices.	√	
7. Inclusive education requires collaborative leadership.	√	
8. Inclusive education requires change in how we teach, evaluate and promote student growth.	√	
9. Inclusion requires changes in the roles of all involved stakeholders.	√	
10. Inclusion requires the development of effective parent-professional partnerships.	√	

Conclusion 1. Inclusion is a broad-based, complex concept that is defined differently by different groups of people in different schools and is based on their embodiment of inclusive policy and practice. The current understanding of inclusion was based upon a set of commonly accepted characteristics (i.e., placement of all students in the regular classroom, in the home, community or neighbourhood school, with appropriate programming, accommodations or modifications and with the required resources and supports). The first three have become accepted policy guiding inclusive practice in schools. The additional characteristics of inclusion defined by the participants represented each "unique incarnation of inclusive schooling" (Grenot-Scheyer et al., 2001, p. 175).

Conclusion 2. Flexibility and continuum of options are required to provide appropriate programming in a learning community that encourages acceptance, tolerance and a sense of belonging within the overall learning community. Few of the participants challenged the moral, ethical, educational and social underpinnings of inclusion, yet the majority questioned the appropriateness for all students all of the time. Although educational policies stipulated that all students be granted access to the regular classroom and to the regular curriculum, it was clearly evident that there was a continuum of tolerance (ranging from the most positive to high resistance) relating to the type and severity of the student's handicapping condition. While almost all of the participants felt comfortable and competent in including students with mild to moderate disabilities, almost all were uncertain about their ability to include students with severe disabilities and questioned the appropriateness of doing so.

Conclusion 3. The ability of schools to sustain inclusive education is dependent on the provision of material, human and financial resources and supports. The struggle to achieve inclusive education has been compounded by problems relating to inadequate funding - lack of adequate resources and supports, time, professional development, supportive infrastructures and so on. Interestingly, the material, human and financial resources available to the participants were relatively similar across the study and still, some perceived they were not supported. While material and financial support were identified as being critical elements of successful inclusion, the human element came across as being the most significant. Two of the seven schools in this study had found a way to work within the confines of the current level of material and financial support because they had created collaborative cultures that involved all stakeholders and provided collaborative supports (e.g., common planning time, support groups, weekly meetings, co-teaching opportunities, etc.) that sustained inclusive practice.

Conclusion 4. The more teachers are encouraged to work within inclusive settings, the more likely they are to build synergy and to be receptive to working with a wider range *of achievement.* Educators' attitudes toward students with disabilities were very closely linked to the success of inclusive policies since it was the educators who brought the policy to life in their day to day practice and who had the job of implementing the mandated provincial curricula. Some of the participants adhered to past "ways of doing things," maintained separateness through segregation and believed in the value of homogeneous groupings and a levelled curriculum. Others willingly attempted to include all students which encouraged other stakeholders to broaden their scope and challenged traditional prejudice toward students with disabilities.

Conclusion 5. One's level of comfort and perception of one's ability must be taken into consideration when moving toward inclusive education. Hall's Stages of Concern were useful for identifying a participant's level of readiness. The participants in this study emphasized the importance of recognizing and accepting each individual's level of readiness since the only way to effectively motivate change was to motivate each individual to examine and reflect on their practice.

Conclusion 6. Inclusion requires that educators be creative and flexible and utilize responsive instruction practices. The literature in this area provided:

> The real point of value of such insights into individual learning is the demand they make for sensitive teaching and curricula which can prevent or minimize learning difficulty. An education system appropriate to the demands of the twenty-first century must be designed to establish a foundation of knowledge and skill for all children and to nurture the particular talents of each child. (Clough, 1998, p. 10)

Past techniques have demanded "mastery" or an "expert status" for both the teacher and the administrator. I contend that when we work to meet the needs of all students we recognize that we will never be the "master" because every child, like every teacher, brings to the learning community his or her own unique set of traits and abilities. When we acknowledge that we do not have all the answers then we become comfortable with "trying new things." When we are willing to try new things then we are, more likely, willing to provide for students who have a wide range of abilities.

Conclusion 7. Inclusion requires collaborative leadership. The two schools in this study that effectively provided inclusive communities had, at the helm, inclusive-minded administrative teams. In contrast, the least inclusive school in this study continued to be administered through a traditional, autocratic or top-down model. When taken together with the findings in the literature, I would suggest that inclusive education is dependent on the active involvement of all participants in the creation and personification of the key values and in the shared decision-making and problem solving processes within the school. As the "gate-keeper," educational leader, administrative leader or manager, the principal is ultimately responsible for the facilitation of inclusive practice.

Conclusion 8. Inclusive education requires change in how we teach, evaluate and promote student growth. The notion of "balance" was a recurrent theme throughout these findings. The term was used in reference to the balance between the rights of the individual (i.e., special needs student) and the rights of the group (i.e., students in the regular classroom). Teachers are expected to provide curriculum that is individually needs-based within the collective policy-based requirements (i.e., provincial curriculum). Curriculum typically reflects the goals and expectations within our greater society and as such, has been a means of exclusion; a method of separating out one group from another. When we deny certain students access to the core curriculum we deny them access to the common goals and greater good of our society's culture.

At present, the individual classroom teacher is often left to determine what and how they choose to teach and to which students and yet, the formal evaluations (i.e., provincial achievement exams) are geared to the goals and objectives of the group. Therefore, many educators struggle with the issue of balancing the mandated provincial expectations in the form of the common core curricula with their belief in the right of access or entitlement for all students.

Conclusion 9. Inclusion calls for changes in the roles and responsibilities of all stakeholders involved in the inclusive context. Inclusive models facilitate inclusion by involving the stakeholders in meaningful collaborative decision-making, problem solving and communication, merging the expertise and resources of the special education and regular streams and by providing collaborative supports (co-teaching opportunities, collaborative skills training, regularly scheduled planning times, etc.) and cultures (parent and/or family involvement and community networking).

There was much evidence in this research to accentuate the struggle of moving from a program delivery model (i.e., curricular focus) to a service delivery model. Involved in this process were many requirements for change: change in administrative decision-making, school structures and organizational support, teaching methodology, evaluation processes, distribution of resources and supports and so on. Educators have been expected to redefine their traditional "way of doing things" and to re-envision their purpose in the overall process of education.

Conclusion 10. Inclusion requires the development of effective parent-professional partnerships. Schools, more than any other institution in society have, as their primary focus, children and their families. At present, there appears to be considerable tension at the administrative level as administrators and parents struggle to define "involvement" and establish boundaries for partnership. Even so, both the literature and results of this study indicate, there needs to be a means for establishing relationships in which both partners are respected and trusted, can communicate easily and clearly and are working together towards a more effective and appropriate education for children.

Recommendations for Practice

> If by 'inclusion' we mean the accessing of educational opportunities then there is evidence to support the claim that special education systems were developed not simply to manage difference but to extend opportunities. If, on the other hand, we concur with Barton (1997, p. 234) that it is about listening to unfamiliar voices, being open, empowering all members and about celebrating 'difference' in dignified ways, the struggle for inclusion remains far from won. (Clough, 1998, p. 45)

The dilemma presented above reflects the question asked at the beginning of this study: How do educators perceive inclusion? For the most part there was a surprising amount of consensus given the variety of perspectives represented by the participants in this study.

Generally, the identified common characteristics sufficiently represented the concept of inclusion. The additional defining characteristics were often school specific, indicating there needs to be considerable latitude in how the policies and practices are interpreted.

Recommendation 1. We must meet the needs of all students by providing services rather than by providing separate programs.

Recommendation 2. Human commitment, thoughtfulness, the motivation to try, a willingness to move beyond traditional role descriptions and boundaries, a desire to challenge traditional teaching methodologies and decision-making processes are required to move toward inclusive education. Inclusion is a concept that requires change in the way educators think about classrooms and school communities and in the organizational and instructional methodologies they use to create and sustain them. Like any change, it is not accomplished quickly and it is not accomplished without opposition or struggle. Regardless of how the change process is approached, it is frequently a difficult process for all involved. Nevertheless, the goals, purposes and ideals of inclusive education are desirable and achievable.

Recommendation 3. As a starting point, it is critical that individual perspectives on the inclusive continuum be valued and respected. Inclusion involves a change process, a human process. And because it is a human process it should be a respectful process. We are now twenty years into the inclusive movement and only recently have educators and researchers discovered that mandating inclusion for inclusion's sake has not proven to be effective. As Marjorie vividly depicted, demanding that involved stakeholders comply to a particular course of action is not the way to lasting, deep change. Marjorie's example confirmed that when inclusion is mandated in a school division or school and people are told what the parameters are, then there is a perception amongst the stakeholders that they do not have ownership of the initiative, that their opinions do not matter. Individuals need to be encouraged to express their concerns and issues because their specific questions may reveal barriers and fears that inhibit their willingness and ability to explore the concept of inclusion.

Recommendation 4. Until such a time when education professionals are adequately supported (i.e., smaller class sizes, increased collaborative preparation and planning time, improved access to resources and supports, adequate professional development and training opportunities, etc.) inclusive initiatives will struggle to thrive. Teachers have been charged with the awesome responsibility of ensuring that all children learn and develop to their fullest potential. They are expected to do this by creating welcoming physical surroundings, secure emotional climates and by utilizing responsive instructional approaches. At the same time, teachers are expected to deliver these individualized programs to 30 students, often with limited resources and supports and with inadequate preparation and planning time.

Recommendation 5. Since successful inclusion is dependent on a collaborative model, administrators, teachers, teaching assistants and other support personnel must learn to work together. Many of the teachers in this study claimed they had difficulty working with teaching assistants and specialists because they did not know how to maximize their time and talents and were uncertain about their role responsibilities. Professional development or training on collaborative relationships and leadership should be considered an essential requirement for all educators.

Recommendation 6. To envision a learning context based on a student-centered, democratic, reflective community where diversity is seen as an opportunity, educators must change how they view the teaching-learning context. Educators have long prided themselves on putting students first, on making educational decisions in the best interests of students, assuming that the needs of adults are secondary. The reality in practice however, was that the reverse was often true. Decisions regarding the placement of students were often made based on the availability of resources and supports and the skills and abilities of individual teachers suggesting that the needs of the educators were of greater importance. Teachers also routinely imposed their expectations on students. In the situations where students were not able to "make the grade" or "meet the expectations," the students failed – not the adult – but the students. I would concur with Miriam who said that when students fail, we have failed to adequately teach. We are not meeting their needs. How educators change may not be immediately apparent, but as we look into ourselves, challenge our traditional boundaries, are open to new ideas about teaching and learning, we will be able to take steps toward truly inclusive education.

Recommendation 7. I would contend that educators must begin where they have the most influence, the most control. Therefore, as educators, we must first change our assumptions about where change can occur. For change to be lasting and meaningful; it must begin within each individual. Much of the literature recommends that the traditional, established system be thrown out and replaced with a new system based upon a new philosophy. Outside of throwing out an entire staff within a building (which was done indirectly by a few administrators who hand-picked inclusive-minded staff when hiring), this was far from a realistic expectation.

Recommendation 8. Together, the stakeholders must establish a common philosophy, vision and strategic plan for moving toward inclusion that is tailored to the talents and skills of the individual stakeholders, considers the available material, human and financial resources, provides collaborative cultures and support structures and involves the parent group and local community as partners. An important finding within this study was that there was no "one best method" for achieving successful inclusion in schools. Initially, I believed it may be possible to package the concept of "inclusion" and distribute it to schools across the province. I have since discovered that the additional defining characteristics of inclusion were many and varied and oftentimes, were school specific. Therefore, there was compelling evidence to suggest that each school must build upon the basic underpinnings of the commonly accepted inclusive model to create their own unique model of inclusive education.

Suggestions for Further Research

Textbooks in the field of special education, written as recently as 1985, do not even list "inclusion" as an alternative for students with disabilities. The most recent titles of articles and books on inclusion reflect current viewpoints on inclusive education (e.g., *A Process, Not a Placement; How Leaders Go Beyond Inclusion; At the End of the Day; A Journey, Not a Destination* and *Inclusion For All? Better Think Again)*. Similarly, each of the schools in this study could be represented through a catchy title illustrating the school's relative position on inclusion. The point of this comparison is that the title selected today will undoubtedly be inappropriate tomorrow because "inclusion" is a living, breathing concept that changes and grows at different rates, in different places and with different groups of people. From the outside, it may appear that schools are not moving toward inclusive models of education. This research revealed that schools are indeed making daily gains and achieving many of the goals of inclusive education. Many of these gains can be attributed to the efforts and contributions of researchers and writers in the field of education. From this study, it was clear that there was a need for further research in the following areas.

1. It would be beneficial to have a more thorough understanding of the conceptions of inclusion since it is upon this conceptual framework that inclusive programs are created.
2. It would be beneficial to study the impact of the provincial mandate for spending on inclusion, to determine if it is feasible to achieve successful inclusive programs within the current fiscal climate. As well, it would be interesting to examine the implications of limited funding on the efficacy of inclusion.
3. It would be beneficial to investigate how we can ensure collaborative leadership within our schools.

4. It would be worthwhile examining the root causes of the barriers to inclusion in order to address them, alleviate or remove them and move on.
5. It would be beneficial to investigate practical routes for moving from a program delivery model to a service delivery model.
6. As key players in the inclusive classroom, the teaching assistants' perspectives would be tremendously beneficial since they should be part of the collaborative team working toward inclusion.
7. There is still much need to experience inclusion through the students' perspective.
8. Further research representing the parent perspective is required to address the issues and concerns as seen from their perspective.

Personal Reflections

It is not a bad idea to get in the habit of writing down one's thoughts.
It saves one having to bother anyone else with them.
- Isabel Colegate

Last September I ran my first half marathon and I vividly recall my thought process upon completing the race: "What on earth motivated me to take on this challenge?" A few weeks after the event I realized my achievement was not in completing the race itself, but was in the day to day process of training, achieving a goal, learning from training partners, increasing my knowledge about, not only running, but technique, equipment, nutrition, fitness and health. As I write the concluding pages of this research study I am struck by a similar revelation. It has taken me the better part of three years to complete this journey and although this effort is a modest first attempt at qualitative research, I have accomplished my goal. From this perspective, these completed pages are relatively insignificant in comparison to the learning I have acquired, not only about my research topic, but from my experiences with colleagues in the Department of Educational Policy Studies and with the participants who willingly volunteered themselves for this study.

The question, "What did you write about?" was asked of me many times throughout the past three years. The answer today, quite honestly, would be different than it would have been at the beginning of this journey. At first, I would have responded, "I want to prove that inclusion is some far out notion created by academics and theorists that has little to do with the practical reality in schools." This was my starting point. I had completed ten years of teaching a variety of special needs students in segregated settings, managed a teaching team and included special needs students in regular classrooms. For the most part, it had been my experience that inclusion did not work. I was extremely frustrated by the barriers I faced that prevented my attempts to move toward a more inclusive kind of practice. The language and terminology I used, at that time, would have been associated with the traditional dual-track model.

Did I believe that all students should be allowed access to the regular classroom and the core curriculum? At some level, I believed. I wanted it to happen but was caught up in the philosophical, practical and logistical struggle of achieving this ideal for students.

Today, I would answer, "I want to share the experiences of educators in inclusive settings. I want to tell their stories." Educators are plagued with the frustrations and challenges this education reform has thrust upon them. They are tired and weary; but have they lost hope? No! Most educators believe in the values and principles of inclusion even if they can't quite get their heads around the logistics and practical barriers. Many are accomplishing amazing things for special needs students despite the current system of financial restraint, limited resources and supports. The synergy created by their success is exciting and contagious. The positive outcomes observed for their students and families are powerful and important. I have seen that inclusive education is possible. Inclusive learning communities (where all students are valued, where diversity is recognized and celebrated, where families are an important part of the culture) do exist.

Still, if I were to be honest with myself, I am not convinced that the regular classroom is an appropriate placement for all students all of the time. There are students whose needs are better served in segregated settings. The decision to include students must involve all of the stakeholders to be impacted by the decision and be based on individual needs. This decision should not be static, meaning that as the needs of students change and the willingness of teachers to include students increases, the decision should be evaluated and re-evaluated on an ongoing basis.

Today, I would argue if an inclusive placement is in the best interest of the student, then we should be responsible to do whatever we need to do to make that happen. Students are no longer yours or mine. Students are ours. Each of us, special education teacher and regular classroom teacher, are responsible for the education of all students. When we break down the "boxes we live in," contribute our entire skill set, share in the decision-making and problem solving processes and believe it is our ultimate responsibility to accept and teach all students, "We really have nothing to fear" (Interview with Marjorie, p. 10).

I do not suggest that the needs of teachers be compromised in an effort to include all students. In fact, I would declare now, more than ever, we need to support educators through this process. Each individual teacher comes to inclusion from a different perspective, a different starting point. Valuing these individual perspectives appears to be an essential preliminary step in developing inclusive programs. It was important for every participant in this study to feel valued, heard, involved and supported throughout the movement toward inclusion. To use Marjorie's wise words again, we should "offer whatever supports to help [teachers] get to the place where they can say, 'yes.' But in the end, it [should] be their call" (Interview with Marjorie, p. 2).

Returning to my half marathon analogy, there have been parts of this journey that have challenged me beyond belief. I recall having tremendous difficulty with my feet at about 16 kilometres and every natural instinct told me it was time to quit. "Just walk. No one will care if you finish. No one will read your finish time in the news!" Similarly, I was well into this research process when I found myself in this same position. After the birth of my third child it took every ounce of my being to stay the course. "Why finish? No one will read it. There are no profound or earth shattering findings." And yet, I owed it to the teachers and administrators who participated in this research, and to myself, to finish. I needed to share their stories and commit my learning to paper.

I am forever changed by this experience and feel privileged to contribute to this collection of thinking and experience. I am just beginning to understand the complexities of research and writing. Often throughout this process, I believed I owned no original thought, I had little to contribute. It seems that the experiences of the participants have become my experiences, the work of the researchers has become my work, the words of the inclusive minded have become my words.

At the end of my race, surrounded by sunshine and the glory of the mountains, I had a desperate need to put my head down and sprint toward the finish line. Likewise, at this point in the research process, I desperately need to be done. I am challenged to reflect on the process and see the benefit beyond my own limited experience. I recognize the many flaws and limitations to this study (my skill as a researcher being one) and hope if this meagre effort helps one person to see themselves reflected in the stories and experiences of the participants in this study, I will have done my part.

I believe this research study offers valuable insights into the realm of inclusion in Alberta middle schools and reveals the tremendous need for continued research. Educators must not be afraid to examine their current practice, reflect on their successes and failures and make efforts to "do the right thing" – that is, to assist students with disabilities and their families to be a part of the learning community in a meaningful way.

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Appendix A:

Sample Correspondence

Nancy Davis
14612 Park Drive
Edmonton, Alberta T5R 5V4
Phone: 489 – 5191
Email: nadavis@compusmart.ab.ca

January 18, 2001

Attention:
Superintendent, Butterfly Flower School Division
1041 – 10A Street
Anytown, AB T1T 2B2

Dear Superintendent:

You may recall our phone conversation, regarding the possibility of conducting research in the Butterfly Flower School Division, on January 17, 2001. I am hopeful that I will be able to make contact with principals and teachers during the next month in order to identify volunteer participants for this study.

Although there appears to be no shortage of research on inclusion at the elementary school level, I believe there is a need for further research on inclusion at the middle school level, particularly in the Canadian context. My proposed research has been granted approval by the Faculties of Education and Extension Research Ethics Board. Please find attached a copy of the application for Ethics Review, a summary statement of the research purpose and procedure for participants, the consent letter for participants, as well as the proposed interview schedule.

Thank you for your time and consideration of this request. If you require further information, have questions, concerns or would like to provide constructive criticism, please feel free to contact me at the above address, email or phone number. I look forward to your reply and am eager to begin.

Sincerely,

Nancy Davis
M.Ed. Candidate and Researcher
University of Alberta

Appendix B

Summary Statement of Research Purpose and Procedure for Participants

Purpose of the Study

The recent movement toward the inclusion of all special needs students, into "the school or classroom they would otherwise attend," has placed new demands on school district administration, school principals and teachers. Decisions regarding policy, implementation and student placement differ from one school district to the next. The practical reality is that there are limited funds available to provide for the support personnel, additional resources, in-service training, low pupil-teacher ratio classrooms, cooperative planning and preparation time which are recommended in the literature as critical components for successful inclusive education.

The purpose of this study is to investigate the perceptions of teachers and administrators regarding inclusive practice in Alberta middle schools in order to identify if the practical reality supports what is recommended in theory.

The specific questions asked in this study are:

1. How is inclusion defined?
2. How is inclusion being practiced?
3. How is success in inclusion being defined?

Benefits of the Study

Much is written in the literature on the history of the inclusive movement, legislation and policy; perceptions of the major stakeholders; factors effecting implementation, and so on. There is as much written in favour of, as there is opposed to, the inclusive movement. However, I suspect that the practical reality in Alberta differs greatly from the ideal described in theory. Therefore, it is hoped that the findings of this study will reflect understandings that come from teachers and administrators. These insights may bring greater awareness of, and appreciation for. the challenges facing those involved in inclusive settings, given the current educational climate in Alberta. As well, it may be possible to identify an Albertan list of critical factors.

For the participants, it is hoped that the process will provide an opportunity to share and reflect on current inclusive practice and therefore, enhance awareness of the ideal, begin a dialogue with others and improve inclusive settings in the future.

Research Methodology

The main data gathering strategy will be based on semi-structured qualitative interviews with eight principals and eight teachers in four different school districts. In addition, classroom observations will be arranged with each of the eight teachers. Data collection will take place over a three month period beginning in February 2001.

Procedures for the Collection, Retention, and Analysis of Data

The process will take place over a number of months: participants need to be obtained, interviews arranged and conducted, audio tapes transcribed, transcripts returned to the participants for verification, data analyzed, and findings interpreted. I expect that the interviews will be conducted at mutually agreeable times and locations and should take no longer than one hour to complete. I also hope to conduct short observations of the inclusive classrooms in order to flesh out the descriptions of the inclusive settings.

The data collected from the interview will be examined carefully and coded for naturally occurring themes. These themes will then be compared across all accounts in order to identify recurrent patterns. The data should reflect the magnitude of the themes and patterns identified. Finally, the data will be compared to findings in the literature.

Right to "Opt Out"

Given that participation is voluntary, participants have the right to withdraw from the study at any time and for any reason without harm or prejudice. All participants will we provided with an executive summary of the findings, upon completion of this process.

Anonymity and Confidentiality

All research will be carried out according to the University of Alberta standards with the intention to present as truthful and clear a picture of inclusive settings in Alberta secondary schools as is possible. The data (audiotapes, transcripts, observation notes, and analyses) will be kept secure and confidential at all times. Although the interview does require collection of some personal information, the information will be altered to protect the confidentiality of participants and their schools. Participants will be given the opportunity to review their transcripts and then edit, veto, clarify, and elaborate upon their responses.

Contact Information

For further clarification or information you may contact either myself or my advisor, Dr. Frank Peters.

Researcher: Nancy Davis (489 – 5191)

Advisor: Dr. Frank Peters (492 – 7607)
Educational Policy Studies
University of Alberta
Edmonton, Alberta T6G 2G5

Participation

I sincerely hope that you will find value in this study and will choose to participate. I recognize this process will require your time and commitment which is often, already overtaxed. However, I believe the results of this study will be of beneficial to all educators currently working in school settings and may influence educational decision making regarding inclusion in the future.

Please take a minute to reflect upon the three main questions presented at the beginning. I look forward to your involvement and am anxious to begin.

Thank you,

Nancy Davis
M.Ed. Candidate and Researcher
University of Alberta

Appendix C:

Letter of Consent

Nancy Davis
14612 Park Drive
Edmonton, Alberta T5R 5V4
Phone: 489-5191
E-mail: nadavis@compusmart.ab.ca

February 1, 2001

Dear Colleague;

Regarding the research project described in the *Summary Statement of Research Purpose and Procedure for Participants*, I would appreciate it if you would acknowledge your willingness to participate by signing in the space provided at the bottom of this letter.

As a participant in this study you will be required to do the following:

1. take part in a one hour audio taped interview,
2. verify the accuracy of your transcripts, and respond either by email, telephone, in writing, or in a short follow-up meeting.
3. be open to an observation, or two, of your inclusive classroom.

There will be no risk of harm in participating and at any time, should you wish to "opt-out" of the study, you may exercise your right to do so. All data will be kept secure, private and confidential and deception will not be used. Some of the data collected will be of a personal nature however, you will find that all personal references will have been altered to protect confidentiality. Following the study you will be provided with an executive summary of the findings. If you have any questions or would like to provide additional information, feel free to contact me by email or at the above phone number.

Thank you for your generosity in sharing your time and insights. I hope that you find the process to be enjoyable and rewarding.

Sincerely,

Nancy Davis

I, ______________________________ am willing to participate in the study described above. I am aware that this research is being conducted as a partial requirement for a graduate studies thesis. As well, I recognize that my confidentiality will be respected, that deception will not be used, and that I may "opt out" at any time for any given reason.

Signed: ____

Date: ____

Appendix D:

Interview Schedule

General Demographic Information:

1. Gender of participant: M/F
2. Education background:
3. Years of teaching experience:
4. Special education experience:
5. Grade(s)/Subjects being taught:
6. Number of special needs students included in the classroom or on IPPs:
7. If known, type of disability of included student(s)
8. Number of teaching assistants

Essential Questions:

1. How is inclusion defined?

2. How is inclusion being practiced?

   Probe Areas:

   - *Roles* of the administrator, classroom teacher, TA, support personnel?
   - *Decision Making*- who is involved in placement decisions? Choice?
   - *Individual Program Plans* – who is responsible for creating, writing, monitoring and evaluating the IPP?
   - *Student Information* – who is included, portion of the day, preparation for students, ceiling or caps for the classroom?
   - *Supports* – specialized equipment, TA time, in-service or training, preparation, cooperative planning, or additional prep time?

3. How is success in inclusive programs defined?

   - *Measurements* – specific standards or measures used, academic skills, social and emotional growth?
   - *Perceived Outcomes* – type(s) of students who are successful? Effect on special needs and regular students, teachers, school staff, school climate, parent contact or involvement

4. Is there anything you would like to share with me about your experience with inclusive education that I may have missed?